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THE JAZZ AND NEW MUSIC MAGAZINE

WIRE



JACK DEJOHNETTE

LIONEL HAMPTON

ODALINE DE LA MARTINEZ

ANDY SHEPPARD

sax
with
the
lights
out

The February releases from Antilles Records

1

tank battles



**DAGMAR KRAUSE:
TANK BATTLES.**

The Songs of Hanns Eisler

Dagmar Krause is the finest modern interpreter of the German song tradition. For the past five years she has been researching an ambitious project, an album devoted to the songs of Hanns Eisler.

Eisler was a German composer whose music was in the vanguard of the political and cultural struggle against Nazism. Forced into exile with the rise of Hitler, Eisler became a leading film-score writer in Hollywood before falling victim to the McCarthy witch-hunts of the late-Forties.

Dagmar has restored Eisler's music and reputation to their rightful place in the culture of our times. TANK BATTLES is no ordinary canon; Dagmar has enlisted the help of American producer/arranger Greg Cohen (from Tom Waits' band) to realize a complete update of Eisler's songs, without diluting the fire and passion of the original music.

TANK BATTLES is released on Monday February 6.

Available on Compact Disc (ANCD 8739), Cassette (ANC 8739) and Album (AN 8739).

S T A T E
o f t h e
A R T

**ANDY SHEPPARD:
INTRODUCTIONS IN THE DARK**

Andy Sheppard is a powerful new voice in the next wave of British jazz.

Such a musician is not mere hyperbole: in the past two years, for instance, he has won the BEST NEWCOMER and BEST INSTRUMENTALIST categories in The Wire's British Jazz Awards.

Now comes INTRODUCTIONS IN THE DARK, the latest chapter in Sheppard's burgeoning career. The album, produced by Steve Swallow, features the stellar playing of Sheppard's regular quartet augmented by vibas, synthesizer and guitar.

INTRODUCTIONS IN THE DARK confirms Sheppard's arrival as a fully-fledged star, a musician of contemporary taste and imagination. The album is released on Monday February 13.

Available on Compact Disc (ANCD 8742), Cassette (ANC 8742) and Album (AN 8742).

For further information about Antilles Records please write to P.O. Box 4, Saeberbridge, West Midland DY9 8DQ



2

ANTILLES

WIRE MAGAZINE

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"I can definitely say that music won't stop. It
will continue to go forward." CHARLIE
PARKER, 1953.



COVER

Andy Sheppard

comes out of

the dark,

by Patrick Gorman

WIRE MAGAZINE

Issue 60

February 1989

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- 4 NOW'S THE TIME All news plus more
- 14 ODALENE DE LA MARTINEZ Brian Morton remembers the name
- 16 LIVEWIRE Music of every stripe under our binoculars
- 22 LIONEL HAMPTON Jivin' with Jack (Cooke)
- 26 ANDY SHEPPARD Exclusive: Kenny Mathieson in the studio
- 34 JACK DEJOHNETTE The drum master meets Richard Cook
- 39 STEVE BACKER Upfront with Brian Priestley
- 40 BOOKS From boogie books to 'cyclos
- 42 JAZZ AWARDS What happened that night by Andrew Potthecary
- 44 BETHINAL GREEN LIBRARY Michael Getzton remembers his lending ticket
- 47 SOUNDCHECK Albums by the lorryload, including Mal, Bley, Murray...
- 62 THE WHITE PLACE Where readers howl

I WALK THE ODALINE

ODALINE De La Martinez's Lontano group and the Sean Tracey Orchestra take the Contemporary Music Network's current season into the spring with national tours in February and March.

Lontano, one of the UK's most innovative chamber ensembles, embark on their first British tour with a programme of Pierre Boulez's *Le Marteau Sans Maître*, Steve Martland's *Remembering Lennox* and Roberto Gerhard's *Libra*. They visit London Queen Elizabeth Hall (31 Jan); Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (3 Feb); Hull Middlesbrough Hall (4); Keele University Chapel (9); Nottingham Great Hall (10); Leicester University (11); Coventry Warwick University Arts Centre (13); Sheffield Firth Hall (14).

Sean Tracey's 15-piece orchestra, with son Clark on drums, will present his *Genesis* suite together with a new suite of Duke Ellington themes arranged by Tracey sr. Dates are London Queen Elizabeth Hall (8 March); Brighton Gaiety Arts Centre (9); Leeds Trades Club (11); Leicester Haymarket Theatre (12); Cardiff St David's Hall (14); Manchester Royal Northern College (15); Birmingham Adnan Boulton Hall (16); Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (17); Gateshead Leisure Centre (18); Sheffield Crucible Theatre (19); Nottingham Albert Hall (20); Swindon Wyvern Theatre (21); Winchester Theatre Royal (22).

February's dates for the CMN's Jack DeJohnette/John Surman and Rova/Keith Tippett Trio tours, first published in last month's *Wire*, are reprinted in *Club Dates* overleaf. Full details on all the above from CMN, 01-629 9495.

ROADSIDE ATTRACTION

ROADSIDE Picnic, the group led by tenorist Dave O'Higgins, mark the February release of their debut LP on RCA's Novus label with a UK tour which begins in London with a concert at Town & Country II on 26 February and also climaxes in London with a week at Ronnie Scott's Club from 20-25 March. Several provincial dates in early March are still being finalised as we go to press. Full details in next month's *Wire*.

MATCH THIS!

MATCHLESS Recordings, the label run by percussionist Eddie Prevost, has four new CD-only releases scheduled for February. These are *Dave Smith's First Piano Concerto*, which features John Tilbury performing the piano music of Dave Smith, *Saltology*, a solo LP of multi-tracked saxophone music by Spirit Level reedsman Paul Dunmall, *Imus*, a new version of Tom Phillips' "contemporary opera" as performed by (among others) Lol Coxhill, Phil Minton, Keith Rowe and Eddie Prevost, and *Saperever*, which documents a London concert by master improvisers Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Keith Rowe and Eddie Prevost.

Paul Dunmall can also be heard on a new Spirit Level cassette, *The Swiss Radio Tape*, which features performances of his own *Earth Watching Suite* plus pianist Tim Richards' *In Search Of The Sixth Sense* suite, which were first broadcast on Swiss radio in November 1988. The cassette, a digital recording on chrome tape, is available from Spirit Level, 37 Dundalk Road, London SE4 2JJ for £5 (plus 50p postage).

SCOTCH AND REIJSSEGER

SCOTTISH jazz fans receive some exclusive treatment as the Ernst Reijseger Quartet, Arild Andersen's Masqualero and the Gary Burton/Chick Corea duo all fly in to play one-off concerts in Scotland in February and March. Dutch cellist/bassist Reijseger's quartet - a tremendous success on the European festival circuit last year - comprises Gous Janssen (piano), Michael Moore (reeds) and the mighty Han Bennink (drums); their only UK gig is at Edinburgh Queen's Hall on 17 February. One month later the same venue hosts another one-off concert when Gary Burton and Chick Corea play a duo on 17 March - though there are plans to televise this gig. Finally, Norwegian bassist Arild Andersen brings his Masqualero group to Glasgow (venue tbc) for their only UK date on 24 February.

TINKLER TAYLOR

GUITARIST Martin Taylor leads his quartet of Dave Green (bass), David Newton (piano) and Allan Ganley (drums) on a Jazz Services tour this month, preceded by a concert at Edinburgh Queen's Hall on 3 February. The tour then gets under way with visits to Maidstone Hazlett Theatre (5 Feb); London Purcell Room (7); Newcastle Corner House (8); Stockton Dovecot Arts Centre (9); Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre (10); Dumfries Jazz Club (11); Hull Spring Street Theatre (12); Swansea Monday's (13); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (14); Preston Guildhall Centre (15); Croydon Fairfield Halls (16); Darlington Arts Centre (17); Aberystwyth Arts Centre (18); Hayes Beck Theatre (19). Details from Jazz Services, 01-240 2430.

DARK TOWN STRUTTERS

SAXOPHONIST Andy Sheppard takes his band on a 15-town tour to celebrate the release of his new Antilles LP *Introductions In The Dark*. Sheppard's regular quintet play the first concert, at London Watermans Arts Centre, on 10 February, and are then supplemented by vibist Orphy Robinson for the remaining concerts at Barrow Old Bull (16 Feb); Canterbury Westgate Hall (17); Andover Cricklade Theatre (18); Brighton Gardner Arts Centre (23); Greenwich Borough Hall (24); Coventry Warwick University Arts Centre (2 March); Edinburgh Queen's Hall (3); Brentwood Monkey Club (5); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (12, 13); Sheffield Leadmill (14); Darlington Arts Centre (16); London Town & Country Club (19); Bristol Theatre Royal (26); Salisbury Arts Centre (31). Support act at all concerts is pianist Paul Reid. Full details from Serious Productions, 01-437 4967.

WOMEN IMPROVISE!

A "CELEBRATION of women in free music" takes place in Sheffield in February, every Thursday at 8 pm at the Hallamshire Hotel. Among the featured groups are: Akemi Kuhn/Vanessa Mackness/Yuki Tsundera; Kaffi Matthews/Sophie Fishwick and women from Nottingham; Linda Lee Welch/Mary Schwarz/Mary Oliver; violin soloist Malou Bergeret; plus Shirley Cameron, Geraldine Monk and others. A further date will be at the Merlin Theatre on 2 March. More details from Linda Lee Welch on 0742 345487. A *Wire* recommended event!



Calls, calls, what's all this then? ERNST REIJSEGER *assists* GBE

preceding evenings being devoted to workshops. The line-up is Lester Bowie and vocalists, Billy Bang and the RPO, plus the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet with a saxophone orchestra (18 March); Andy Sheppard, Nana Vasconcelos, Paul Read, Danny Thompson (19), Cecil Taylor dance project (20). Venue for the first two gigs is the Town & Country Club, for Cecil Taylor it's the Shaw Theatre. More details in next month's *Wire*.

GUY IN "PUNCH-UP" WITH ORCHESTRA!

BASSIST Barry Guy performs the world premiere of his "music-theatre double-bass concerto" *Anna* at London's Royal College of Music on 24 February. Guy describes the composition, which is based on a poem by Dadaist painter Kurt Schwitters, as "a friendly punch-up between me and the orchestra". Other pieces on the programme are Berio's *Symphonies* and Stockhausen's *Tanz*; conductor is Edwin Roxburgh.

BLOWS AGAINST APARTHEID

LONDON'S JAZZ Cafe is to host a series of Jazz Artists Against Apartheid concerts, the second of which takes place on Monday 13 February. Branchchild of Jazz Cafe proprietor Jon Dabner and bass player Roger Bunn—who was previously involved in organising the highly successful *Golfers Against Apartheid* group—the monthly concerts will feature both regular groups and visiting guest artists. Proceeds will go both to the UK anti-apartheid movement and, it is hoped, to various underground music organisations in South Africa itself.

PANZA DIVISION

RECENT OBE recipient Mike Westbrook has a hectic spring in prospect, with UK and European tours followed by the world premiere of his first opera. The opera, written in collaboration with Kate Westbrook and based on Miguel Cervantes' classic novel *Don Quixote*, will be premiered in France in April; to begin the year, however, his trio A Little Westbrook Music, with Kate Westbrook and Chris Biscoe, undertakes its first major UK tour with concerts in Exeter Arts Centre (10 Feb); Bristol Arncliffe (11); Dartington Arts Centre (12); Bracknell South Hill Park (14); Leicester Phoenix Arts Centre (18); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (2 March); Burnley Padiham Town Hall (3); Darlington Arts Centre (4); Hull Spring Street Theatre (5); London The Tabernacle (11); London Albany Empire (12).

THE RISE AND RISE OF ROLAND PERRIN

EVIDENCE, the group led by pianist/composer Roland Perrin, begin the New Year with an extensive eight-date tour—in and around London! The gigs—a run-up to the recording of the group's first LP (label as yet unknown)—take place at London Stockwell The Plough (2, 9, 16, 23 Feb); London Rotherhithe Prince Of Orange (6); Cambridge Flambards (10); Ipswich Wolsey Theatre (12); London Jazz Cafe (25).

SHOWERS OF STARS

ANTHONY Braxton, the Bob Berg-Mike Stern Band, "Big" John Patton and the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet are among the illustrious visitors to Britain in February and March.

Multi-instrumentalist Braxton brings a trio featuring drummer Tony Oxley to London's Royalty Theatre on 12 March for a one-off concert that also includes a solo set from saxophonist Evan Parker. Details from Spexout, 01-836 4119. Ex-Miles men Bob Berg and Mike Stern take their quartet to Edinburgh (24 February); Leeds (25); London (26)—these venues dbc; and Cardiff Four Bars Inn (27). A few weeks later the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet, featuring almost Bobby Watson, will visit London Scala Cinema (14 March); London Town & Country Club (18) and Manchester Band On The Wall (23), with the likelihood of extra concerts being added later. Details of this and the Berg-Stern tour from Serious Productions, 01-437 4967.

Finally, organist "Big" John Patton, best-known for his Blue Note recordings from the 1960s, makes a rare, one-off UK appearance at Beithon's Top Rank Suite on 24 February. Patton will play with a local quartet that includes tenorist Jean Toussaint, while

Robin Jones King Salsa and the Wayne Foundation are among the support acts. DJs in action include concert-organisers Baz Fe Jazz and Russ Dewbury. Tickets are £5 in advance, £6 on the door.

CAMDEN GOES BANG!

BILLY Bang, Lester Bowie and (provisionally) Cecil Taylor are among the artists scheduled to appear at this year's Camden Festival—and each will perform in a highly unusual setting! Violinist Bang will play with the Reggae Philharmonic Orchestra in an explosion of string fever, while Lester Bowie appears with From The Roots To The Source vocalist David Pearson and South African choir Uthingo Amabutho. The Cecil Taylor concert, which had still to be confirmed at pretime, will feature the great pianist reading his poetry and playing with a dance troupe on pieces he choreographed himself.

The festival will run from 13–20 March, but concerts take place only on the final three days, the

where
it's at
this
month

ALDERSHOT <i>West End</i>	BRIT-MAGYAR QNT 6	NOTTINGHAM <i>Allert Hall</i>	STAN & CLARK	BRIT-MAGYAR QNT 3
BRUCE TURNER QNT 17	ORPHY ROBINSON 11		TRACY, ALAN &	JAZZ CAFE
BIRMINGHAM <i>Adrian</i>	DAVE DEERIES 16	JACK DEJOHNETTE, 16	JIMMY SKIDMORE 2	CHRIS BISCOE QNT 1
<i>Birds Hall</i>	TREVOR WATTS	JOHN SURMAN 3	<i>Leah Centre</i>	EDDIE PREVOST QNT 2
ABDULLAH IBRAHIM 2	DRUM ORCHESTRA 18	<i>Old Vic</i>	ORPHY ROBINSON 10	MARTIN SPEAKE TRIO 3
JACK DEJOHNETTE,	HERB ELLIS 20	BRIT-MAGYAR QNT 1	GARY BOYLE'S TRIPLE	CLARK TRACEY QNT 4
JOHN SURMAN	<i>St David's Hall</i>	PERCUSSION A 15	ELJO 24	TALISKER 5
ROVA/KEITH TIPPETT	LOOSE TUBES 11	ALAN SKIDMORE QNT 22	TAUNTON <i>Brewhouse</i>	JULIAN ARGUELLES,
TRIO 26	COUNT BASIE	OLDHAM <i>Reynolds Hall</i>	COURTNEY PINE 10	SIMON PURCELL QNT 8
<i>Cannell Hall</i>	ORCHESTRA 19	JOHN TAYLOR, STEVE	YORK <i>Connaught Hall</i>	ELTON DEAN QNT 10
MARTIN SPEAKE TRIO 4	CHELLENHAM	ARGUELLES 22		MARK SANDERS, PAT
THEO TRAVIS QNT 11	<i>Everyman Theatre</i>	OXFORD <i>Brewhouse</i>	<i>London</i>	THOMAS DUO 12
BRACKNELL <i>South Hall</i>	JACK DEJOHNETTE,	SUP SHATTUCK K-		JAZZ ARTISTS
<i>Perth</i>	JOHN SURMAN 5	TERRY DISLEY BAND 1		AGAINST APARTHEID 13
BRIT-MAGYAR QNT/	<i>Queen's Hotel</i>	<i>Hollywell Music Room</i>	BASS CLEF	PINKIE ZOO 17
NIEBLA & FORCIONNE 7	DISTRICT SIX 17	STEVE BERESFORD 16	DAVE BITELL'S	ED JONES QNT 18
BRENTWOOD <i>Newport Club</i>	COVENTRY <i>Warwick University Arts Centre</i>	<i>Jarvis Tavern</i>	ONWARD JAZZ 1	MARTIN SPEAKE QNT 19
CHRIS BISCOE QNT 5	JACK DEJOHNETTE,	MARTIN SPEAKE QNT 13	SIMON PURCELL QNT/	ZUBOP 24
MARTIN SPEAKE QNT 12	JOHN SURMAN 1	SEVENTH AVENUE	MARTIN SPEAKE TRIO 2	DUDO PURWANA 27
BRIGHTON <i>The Concorde</i>	DURSLEY <i>Primo</i>	PORTSMOUTH	JIMMY KNEPPER -	OASIS
TREVOR WATTS	HUMAN CHAIN 4	<i>Cambridge Hall</i>	BOBBY WELLS QNT 5-9	DREK BAILEY WITH:
DRUM ORCHESTRA 17	LEEDS <i>Trade Club</i>	DUSKO GOYKOVICH,	"PUFFBALL" 12-16	STEVE BERESFORD,
ROVA/KEITH TIPPETT	ABDULLAH IBRAHIM 4	GIANNI BASSO 20	ELTON DEAN - JOHN	TONY BEVAN, MATT
TRIO 18	ALEX MAGUIRE BAND 18	SHEFFIELD <i>Leeds Hall</i>	ETHERIDGE QT 19	LEWIS 4
BRISTOL <i>Albany Centre</i>	TRIO 25	DUSKO GOYKOVICH,	ALFREDO RODRIGUEZ	PETER CUSACK, CLIVE
HEAVY QUARTET 11	LLANTWIT MAJOR	GIANNI BASSO 19	SEPTET 21-25	BELL 11
<i>Albany Inn</i>	<i>St David's Arts Centre</i>	ROVA/KEITH TIPPETT	JOHN PARRICELLI	JOHN BUTCHER, WILL
MARTIN SPEAKE TRIO 5	ROVA/KEITH TIPPETT	TRIO 21	TRIO 28	EVANS 18
<i>Old Vic</i>	TRIO 23	SOUTHAMPTON <i>Salon</i>	BATTERSEA <i>Arts Centre</i>	BARREY GUY 25
ROVA/KEITH TIPPETT	HAIDSTONE <i>Havett</i>	TREVOR WATTS	MARTIN SPEAKE QNT 10	ROYAL FESTIVAL
TRIO 19	HARRY "SWEETS"	<i>Concorde Club</i>	CLUB IMPROV	HALL
BURNLEY <i>Marshall</i>	EDISON 26	DUSKO GOYKOVICH,	TONY MARSH GROUP 7	BRIT-MAGYAR QNT 3
CHRIS BISCOE QNT 3	MANCHESTER <i>Band On The Wall</i>	GIANNI BASSO 22	BIG BATTLE/LAZ	MARTIN SPEAKE TRIO 7
CALDICOT <i>Leisure Centre</i>	CHRIS BISCOE QNT 2	<i>Tavern Sma Hall</i>	SPEYER, HUGH	ROVA/KEITH TIPPETT
HARRY "SWEETS"	NEWCASTLE UPON	JACK DEJOHNETTE,	METCALFE DUO 14	TRIO 16
EDISON 8	TYNE <i>Carver House</i>	JOHN SURMAN 7	VANESSA MACKNESS 21	RONNIE SCOTT'S
CAMBRIDGE <i>Flambers</i>	HARRY "SWEETS"	STAMFORD <i>Arts Centre</i>	JIM DVORAK, JON	CLUB
EDDIE PREVOST QNT 3	EDISON 14	CHRIS BISCOE QNT 4	LEOVI, MARCO	EDDIE DANIELS QNT
MARTIN SPEAKE QNT 17	GARY BOYLE TRIO 28	SWANSEA <i>Jazz Society</i>	MATTOS, KEN HYDER 28	30 Jan-11 Feb
DON WELLS QNT 24	NORWICH <i>Arts Centre</i>	HARRY "SWEETS"	CROYDON <i>Fairfield Hall</i>	CHICO FREEMAN,
CARDIFF <i>Four Bars Inn</i>	BRIT-MAGYAR QNT 2	EDISON 7	CLUB BASIE	ARTHUR BLYTH
JAMIE TALBOT 2		SWINDON <i>Arts Centre</i>	ORCHESTRA 8	QNT 13-25
			DUKE OF	ANITA O'DAY
			WELLINGTON	28 Feb-4 Mar





CHARLIE ROUSE (1924-1988)

TENOR SAXOPHONIST Charlie Rouse, best-known for his long association with Thelonious Monk, has died in Seattle of lung cancer at the age of 64. Rouse was born in Washington DC in April 1924 and first caught the attention playing with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in the Billy Eckstine band of 1944. He went on to play in most of the leading big bands of the day, including those led by Tadd Dameron, Count Basie and Duke Ellington before a period of free-lancing that culminated with the formation of his own group Les Jazz Modes in 1956.

Three years later he joined pianist/composer Thelonious Monk for a partnership that was to last for 11 years, until Monk retired from extensive touring. Rouse returned to free-lancing for most of the 1970s, then in 1982 he helped to form Sphere, a group which began as a tribute to Monk but went on to develop an impressive repertoire of its own. Though his work with Monk was sometimes under-rated, Rouse, who died on 30 November last, was always a strong, distinctive stylist. Some of his best work with Monk can be heard on the latter's *Live In Stockholm* 1961 LP (released last year by Dragon), while his recent playing is well-represented by a 1987 LP with the Stan Tracey Quartet, *Playin' In The Yard* (Steam).

GRAHAM LOCK

NICA DE KOENIGSWATER (1914-1988)

JUST DAYS earlier the London Film Festival had premiered a fine, music-filled movie called *Thelonious Monk: Straight No Chaser* directed by Charlotte Zwerin (Mike's ex-wife). The director was impressive in front of an audience, and in the film were three other important women: Monk's wife Nellie, daughter Barbara (Boo Boo), both silent on screen and - talking for the first time publicly - Baroness Nica de Koenigswater. Inspiration

for Horace Silver's classic "Nica's Dream", for Gigi Gryce's "Nica's Tempo" and for Monk's beautiful "Pannonica", she died on 1 December.

A benefactor and moral support for many musicians, she had the charisma and the financial independence to be very much a personality in her own right. Monk introduces her to the cameraman in a funky backstage area with the words, "This woman is a *billonaire*" and then kids her about her father's family (the Rothschilds, no less) having helped out the emperor Napoleon. Her marriage to a mere Baron was apparently only dissolved in 1956, but she had already moved to New York four years earlier to be around the players she admired.

Her New Jersey apartment of the late 1950s onwards (commemorated by the Blakey track "Wechawken Mad Pad" and overrun with hordes of felines in the film) was open house to the other kind of cats. Some speculated about her motives, typified by Hampton Hawes's bemusement over her fluency with juvenile talk and 12-letter swear-words delivered in her "clipped English accent" (christened Kathleen Annie Pannonica, she was raised over here). But there's an interesting portrayal in Nat Hentoff's novel for teenagers, *Jazz Country*, based at least partly on the Baroness, where the white would-be musician asks her why she's accepted by his black heroes; she says in effect that she relates to them as fellow human beings, not as heroes.

Aspiring patrons of the jazz world have been few and usually ended up earning good money from it, such as John Hammond or Norman Granz, but Nica never needed to do that. Instead her voice-over in the Monk film shows how, in her own way, she suffered for her devotion to black creators: "I used to live at the Stanhope Hotel [pronounced very British upper-crust as "Stannup"] but, after Bird died there, they threw me out. Then I moved to the Bolivar, where Thelonious composed all the tunes on *Brilliant Corners*. We used to bring back all the musicians after their gigs, and have jam sessions till eight and nine in the morning. Eventually that caused a bit of trouble, and so I got thrown out of there too."

BRIAN PRIESTLEY



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ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS

by Biha Kopp

VOICES PREMATURELY silenced rarely remain so. *The Noise Of Time*, to borrow Russian poet OSIP MANDELSTAM's resonant title, does not bury them so much as amplify them — "and only by listening to the swelling noise of the age and bleached by the foam on the crest of its wave did we acquire a language". The voice of Mandelstam, who died in one of Stalin's camps, is an apt illustration of the process, even if it only echoes indirectly through NY guitar harmonic overlanders BAND OF SUSANS' one memorable song to date, called "Hope Against Hope" after Mandelstam's wife's biography. (Its sequel *Hope Abandoned* would have been a better starting point for getting down the noise of a present capitulating to market forces.)

The vociferous voices of Dada, Surrealism and Futurism, on the other hand, have rarely paused for breath since they were first raised across a Europe ravaged by the First World War. Their violent rending of perceptions made wounds of the eyes and ears, opening them to the infections of the age of noises; and ever since art and music have not been allowed to close the wounds, an/aesthetise them, or cleanse them, of life's uglinesses. From Burroughs through Hip Hop it's hardly necessary to reel off a litany of names indelibly daubed by Dada *et al.* (*Who's Af? — Ed.*) Suffice it to say a lovingly compiled selection of many a livid experimenter's ancestral voices like *Futurism And Dada Reviewed* (Sub Rosa SUB 33014-19, address: PO Box 808, 1000 Brussels, Belgium) is not only a thunderous celebration of Anti Art breaking wind in the salons and new ground outside them; it also reveals where the present acquired its liveliest languages.

Although it shares some archive recordings with the Liverpoolian Ark label's *Dada For Now* (Russolo, Tzara, Janco, Huelsenbeck), it raises the volume of its own broadside with two Futurist manifestos from MARINETTI loudly proclaimed above vamped piano improvisations, reminiscences from DUCHAMP, HUELSENBECK and TZARA underscored with the first-named's treated piano piece, WYNDHAM LEWIS as enemy decoy wilfully drawing flak from all sides, and, lastly, the irresistibly indiscreet charm of JEAN COCTEAU reciting to

lobby jazz orchestral backing.

Every age translates Dada collage and *objets trouvés* reclamations of pre-existing forms according to its own needs. Neue Slowenische Kunstlers Laibach described their rough house expropriations of Art as *Retrogard*. Berlin's DIE HAUT used to hallow their loving, yet scientifically precise exhumations of the guitar instrumental with the term Conservative Extremism. The term's been dropped, but their current LP *Headless Body In A Topless Bar* (What's So Funny About . . . German import) displays they've lost none of their acumen for coupling slow-fuse guitar dynamics with guttering titles like "Spontaneous Human Combustion". A vocal side featuring Nick Cave, Anita Lane, Mick Harvey and Kid Congo increases its potential to set box offices ablaze.

The American SST label is equally devoted to the guitar as incendiary device, but too many of its releases (recently, from Das Damen and The Screaming Trees) fan the embers of charred Byrds, Black Sabbath and Husker Du albums without really setting them alight. HENRY KAISER's punning *Those Who Know History Are Doomed To Repeat It* (SST 198), however, goes for a more difficult take on THE GRATEFUL DEAD's "Dark Star/The Other One", enriching certain of its improvised passages with an extended instrumental range that adds depth of field to Dead Space. If nothing else it proves that, at rock's final reckoning, the too easily maligned Grateful Dead never let you down. They have *The Noise Of Time* on their side.

NEW FUSION

by Paul Gilroy

RHYTHM AND jazz event of the month has got to be the major-label debut of MICHEL CAMILO, pianist extraordinaire. A sometime sidekick of Paquito D'Rivera, Camilo is a florid, almost baroque, Latin stylist who is tenaciously loyal to the acoustic instrument. He hails from the Dominican Republic and has already cut several tasty albums for Japanese and European release on the Electric Bird label. His two previous sets plus an exhilarating album with the late-lamented band French Toast were notable for the dazzling musical partnership which Camilo formed with contra-bassist Anthony Jackson. His classically-inspired harmonic inventions provided the dynamic counterpart to Camilo's soloing which thrives in a trio setting. With drummer Dave Weckl this pair formed an

NOW'S THE TIME



exemplary small group whose recordings of classic material by Jaco Pastorius and Airto will be savoured in years to come.

Picked up at last by CBS for their new Portrait imprint, Camilo's latest outing sticks with the trio format. Unfortunately, it's minus Jackson who has fled jazz to try one last pop gambit with Easy Pieces on A&M. Marc Johnson on stand-up and Fender bassman Lincoln Goines each get a side to try and fill his shoes. They don't quite make it but there isn't a dud track to be had. Camilo's compositions have a special profundity and Mongo Santamaria pops up to accompany him on a characteristically ornate version of "Blues Bossa". It's an excellent record that will satisfy funkateers and traditionalists alike.

AMINA CLAUDINE MYERS is another keyboard player in the news. Her debut album for RCA Novus is winning her some new friends and includes "Happiness" a neat organ-led instrumental that has been picking up plaudits from the discerning dancefloor crowd tuned in to the steak-bar Hammond sound by cutouts from Charles Earland and Reuben Wilson.

Miles Davis's ivory tinkler ROBERT IRVING also has a solo album out and it's a brave attempt to overturn some preconceptions of what contemporary black music is about. A small core of pop-oriented material features Phil Perry's vocals while the out-and-out fusion tracks are enlivened by some dynamic chops from John Scofield, Buddy Williams and Darryl Jones. BILLY MITCHELL keeps on ploughing the fusion furrow with *In Focus* (Optimism); he is strongly supported as usual by bassie Welton Gite and flautist John Bolivar. Their two-step version of "Some Day We'll All Be Free" is a conspicuous success. Shame about the drum samples though, Bill.

RIP RAP

by Russell Lack

LAST YEAR flashed off the screen in a late burst around November/December time with a great deal of style, significantly much of it fermented here in the UK. The last two releases from the Music Of Life label — "Vibes" by the Demon Boyz and the astonishing "Hold No Hostage" from Brixton rappers HIJACK show off the heavy density side to what is now becoming an indigenous music branching off into two distinct

tive strands. Hijack's performances on vinyl are approaching something very special indeed; "Hold No Hostage" features turntables that T-A-L-K, spectres from the living deep coupled with a structure whose speed and impact imply a whole lot of serious thinking has gone into this music, *jeux sans frontières*.

It's labels like Gee Street and BPM who presently dictate the alternative "lighter" forms of homegrown hip hop, exemplified in the excellent STREO MC's whose "What Is Soul" signifies something like a return to a sparser "live" sound complete with real instrumentation and a far more open and relaxed vocal technique, which in turn pushes the melody further away from the beats, expanding the possibilities still further. *Hardcore Volume One* is BPM's *entrée* into the slipstream, assembling a whole host of UK talent including the excellent DJ CUE TIPS & DASHY D, MC REASON, MC FIZAL EFF and RHYMESIDE, an appealing blend of gogo and farback to carry forward this *choix anglais*. DEE MAJOR's "Rat Race" boasts live piano, live flute "as well as live drums" gush Carr Records, clearly equating credibility with the ability to play one's instrument . . . well.

Which brings us back across the tracks to the Musicians Union who still refuse to be drawn over the issue of D Js' status as "musicians" or magpies. I would have thought that in these times of universal deregulation, the union would be concerned to strengthen its membership to counteract the oncoming plethora of "work-fair" schemes likely to take effect in all areas of entertainment in the coming months. What they are effectively doing is marginalising significant numbers of music makers drawn, incidentally, from the cutting edge of mass-music; it's a policy that looks a lot more like a critical judgement than one based upon political efficacy.

It's been a long time coming but released at last is the ULTRAMAGNETIC MC's album *Critical Breakdown* (ffrr) which purrs along with their unique charm first heard on "Funky" last year. This is primitive, skeletal hip hop, marrying R&B sub patterns to some of the toughest, most original cut-ups to come out of NYC in a long while. Also notable is the all-star cast to be heard on Jive's "Stop The Violence" single, a reworking of the BDP anthem; the record features KRS-1, PUBLIC ENEMY, STITTASONIC, MC LYTE and KOOL MOE DEE whose collective energies have been mined in a consciousness-raising exercise that attempts to stem the lamentable flow of, first, the violence so often associated with the music and, second, the even crasser amplifications of this by the tabloids.

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NOVUS



cha cha chachi

Composer, conductor,
South American dance fan,
Odaline de la Martinez
tells Brian Morton
of her musical travels,
from Voodoo to Lontano.
Photo by Coneyl Jay.

THE *DAILY MAIL* has over the years made only two significant contributions to literature. The first, which we're all guilty of on an off day, is the Why, oh why piece (formula: deadline + prejudice = article); more than two per annum and you get people knocking at your door for the NUJ card. Much more insidious, though, and now rarely seen outside the *Mail* or the *Woman's Realm*, is the altogether nastier Isn't it refreshing feature.

It is — I know, I know — remarkably refreshing to meet someone like Odaline de la Martinez, composer, co-founder and

conductor of Lontano, probably the most imaginatively innovative chamber group currently working in a contemporary repertoire. Ms Martínez — who meticulously answers to "Chachi", derivation unsought and unknown — is a genuine enthusiast for the music, and a remarkably able propagandist.

"Probably" always sounds like a larger commercial, but given the becalming of the London Sinfonietta in the kind of doldrums induced by large slicks of Arts Council money, Lontano are one of the few new-music ensembles pushing the boat out on new and surprising work. Eclecticism — which featured in the title of a recent two-part season — is very much the charted course and Ms Martínez is distinctly hostile to the slavishly academic. "I think in general there are two types of composer. There are those who want to please, who will do what's expected of them. And there are those who don't care, or who are just concerned with pleasing themselves. The whole contemporary music scene is so dependent on critics and sometimes composers do write for the critics instead of what they believe in. In the 19th century, they were probably less important, but in this century, and particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, composers were so anxious for novelty (so that the critics would write about them) that they got carried away."

The chapter heads for the 1980s in the future music histories will almost inevitably read "The Return To Tonality". Unless you're a hidebound reactionary that doesn't equal "The Return To Normality".

"There is a real closed-mindedness in this country about contemporary music that is tuneful and romantic. Such people regard it as an affront to any audience to have to go backwards. But, of course, no one has to go backwards. If you've known Schoenberg, if you've known Boulez, if you've known Stockhausen, that's always there. Unless you want to write pastiche, you can't go back."

SHE HAS herself just "gone back", this time as a teacher, to the Royal Academy of Music in Marylebone, where Lontano, co-founded with flautist Ingrid Culliford, grew out of a student group.

"I was a trouble-maker then. I hated the stuffiness and I worried about going back to that. But there has been a tremendous change. There has been a Lutosławski festival, a Henze festival, there is a Berio festival in the spring, I've been asked to work on a cycle of music of the Americas for 1990 with Paul Patterson. I can't imagine anywhere else where you'd get that."

Her own musical background is very much of the Americas, and not so much Tanglewood and Berkshire. "I was born in Cuba and my first memories of music were of Afro-Cuban drumming. Very close to my parents' house, just behind in fact, there used to live one of the voodoo queens of the province, and my first memories are of hearing the most incredibly, beautifully complex talking drums. I remember falling asleep and waking to the sound. Memories like that are very important because you don't feel rhythm as though you're playing in time. You feel rhythm

physically. I extend that to conducting: there are those who conduct in time and those who conduct rhythmically."

There's little of the histrionic about her presence on the podium but, equally, there's little doubt as to where on that divide her own work falls. Despite that refreshing openness to all that is going on in contemporary music, lush romanticism and squeaky-door modernism, both, there is a hint of demonology. "I think of one particular figure, who is a fine composer and an important conductor, but who has become so adamant to anything that is not complex, ultra-modern, post-Webernian, that he has refused to accept it, and that is Pierre Boulez. He has done great things. He has revived Webern and has made some wonderful music, but . . . I've had French composers say to me that as long as Boulez is alive, there will be no tonal music in France. That is a one-man Inquisition. It's something you don't get in America, though there are plenty of people working here who have followed that mentality to the letter, who believe that music should only go in one direction and who teach students that tonality is a terrible mistake. You have to find your own direction."

The Lontano repertoire and Ms Martínez's own compositional work bear every sign that her compass is not being swayed by the massive gravitational pull of IRCAM or Darmstadt. "My way of writing is very emotional and intuitive." She accepts wholly Gavin Bryars' point about the critics' fear of sentiment and the pointless valorisation of complexity for its own sake. She also accepts the inevitability that all music has some nationalistic component.

"Self-consciousness in itself can be very dangerous. Look, though, at Latin American composers, the generation of Villa-Lobos. He was not afraid of being nationalistic. Though he was conscious of it, made a virtue of it, his music was natural, it just poured from him. His Brazilianness was incredible but it didn't stop him from being, as I think, one of the most important and underrated composers of this century. I put him on a par with Stravinsky. Look at another generation, and someone like Ginastera. He began as a nationalist, but began to look towards Europe and his music became very Europeanised. And then there are a whole bunch of Latin American composers who are writing today. Whether or not they live there, they have returned to their roots. They look on Villa-Lobos as a hero. One of those, who is living in this country, is Javier Alvarez, another is Alejandro Vinaso. They are not afraid of writing a tumba or a mambo or whatever, because there are no inhibitions there."

Ms de la Martínez isn't exactly heavy on inhibitions herself. She's confidently — rather than polemically — feminist, and accepts that being one of a growing but still rare group of women conductors presents few special problems. Though unwilling to push a potentially arrogant comparison with Boulez, she remains convinced of the ultimate success of the rhythmic tendency over the hard left of the metronome. And, as "Lontano" was meant to suggest, she intends to go far. Why, oh why — as they say — aren't there more like her?

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Jan Garbarek Quartet

MANCHESTER
ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE
OF MUSIC

INTERVIEWING. Ronald Shannon Jackson recently, the Texan drummer/composer had this to say on the subject of what constitutes acceptable home entertainment on the Jackson Midi-system: "Oh man, everything. I can listen to the Mystic Voices of Bulgaria or Michael Jackson. I can listen to Prince, some Tibetan Bell Music, The Boston Pops, Aaron Copland, Hendrix. Play me some gospel, man I love it."

Surprised? You shouldn't be. It's all part and parcel of the New Eclecticism and in the current climate of ethnic one-upmanship it's the one attitude that comes pre-packaged with all the ingredients it takes to get ahead.

Jan Garbarek has consistently achieved a level of critical and commercial success without, it seems, ever having to worry about what it takes to get ahead or where the next career move is coming from. I don't think I'm being naive here, by the way, because Garbarek has pushed his combination of free-ish jazz and European folk music relatively unchanged for nearly two decades now, regardless of the vagaries of fashion and consumer choice. None the less, during his quartet's performance at Manchester's RNCM last November the New Eclecticism ran rife to such an extent that the casual observer would have been forgiven for thinking here was a group firmly in

touch with the prevailing mood and determined to gain some plus points out of it.

A refusal to work within the confines of a genre is the fundamental underpinning for this old/new attitude. In the case of Garbarek and his group that means embracing all the possibilities and advances of music technology as well as incorporating a wide variety of inter-related and disconnected musical idioms into a vaguely jazz-based framework. Bassist Eberhard Weber's use of live overdubbing, the introduction of an Andalusian-like melody on "Haste Siempre", the combination of wood flute and digital synth on "Tongue Of Secrets", or Nana Vasconcelos' use of a drum machine alongside traditional Brazilian percussion instruments such as the *caixari* and the large *tordo* drum: all are choices of attitude as much as aesthetics.

Such cultural and idiomatic mixing 'n' marching is now so prevalent that sceptics are already projecting a bleak future of pan-global homogeneity for music. On tonight's evidence the opposite would appear to be more likely. Even within the restrictive austerity of Garbarek's music there is a sufficient amount of give and take between the respective ingredients to create pieces as diverse in texture and mood as, for instance, "Mecca" and "The Crossing Place".

Like it or not, for two hours in a Manchester music venue Garbarek and his co-conspirators sounded out the future.

TONY HERRINGTON

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival 1

HUDDERSFIELD IS an odd little place, which isn't at all to say that it's an odd

place to hold a contemporary music festival. Though unmistakably of its shire, it has some of the compact, fortified qualities of an Italian hill town. Once inside the ring of Castle-gate and under the spell of Richard Steinitz's brilliant programming, it's surprisingly easy to forget that this is the "North" of *New Statesman* And *Society* jeremiads.

Inevitably, Stockhausen's was the commanding presence, but not an oppressive one. It's also Olivier Messiaen's 80th birthday and as tribute Peter Hill gave a selection (22 November) from the *Catalogue D'Orpheus*, only a little less limpid than his recent superb recording. On the last but one day (26 November) the Prometheus Ensemble gave a morning concert that culminated — it was all I was able to catch — in a very moving *Quartet For The End Of Time*, one of the benchmark compositions of the century.

Huddersfield has always managed to avoid the premiere-mania of other festivals, a sensible number of new commissions added to a solid aggregate of modern classics. Again on the penultimate day, the Schoenberg Quartet (who are Dutch, not Viennese) played four of the classic works of serial modernism: Weber's 1905 quartet and Bagatelles, Schoenberg's fourth quartet, and the *Quartet No 3* by his brother-in-law Zemlinisky.

Remarkable as that was, the real meat and potatoes was in the newer names and faces. Louis Andriessen, another Dutchman, didn't quite live up to advance promise. There's a stolid undercurrent to his work, even the striking harpsichord works *Overture For Orpheus* and *Double Track* (27 November, played by Tuula Hakkila), which I found dunting, though the quartet *Law* (19 November) was startling and featured as added

bonus the talents of cellist/saxophonist Eduard Altena.

The harpsichord concert highlighted the one sure coming star of the festival, the Finnish Kaija Saariaho, who is as sharply individual a composer as anyone I've heard in years. A pupil of Brian Ferneyhough, she works in haunting measures and with a remarkable grasp of tone-colour. The piece for harpsichord and tape, *Secret Garden II*, develops a sure but still surprising palette and leaves the secret cunningly unresolved. I only heard the solo cello piece *Petals* (22 November, played by Rohan de Saram on a too rare foray from the Arditti String Quartet; he's one of our most precious musical commodities) but repeated listenings to a publisher's tape suggest that my dropped jaw isn't neurological. The cello concert strengthened the Third World current in the festival, featuring traditional Sri Lankan drumming and some tambura work from John "Indo Jazz Fusions" Mayer.

There were two pieces by American Lou Harrison, the *Concerto For Piano And Gamelan* (18 November) and the flute *Air* (20 November), the latter played by Robert Aitken. There was the now obligatory sampling of Takemitsu pieces — *Rain Tree Sketch*, *Windhorse*, *Rain Spell*. These look good on paper, but, despite my earlier advocacy in *Wre*, they do pall remarkably quickly into a bland New Ageish backwash. No second thoughts, though, about Judith Weir, whose *King Harold's Saga*, *Gentle Violence*, *Conversations Of Subsidiarity*, confirmed her growing stature.

As usual at Huddersfield, the back-up of talks, interviews, workshops and competitions was excellent and provocative. Walking back through the rather ridiculous station portico was a little like stepping out of the Tardis. How could there possibly be all

1) Clarinetist IAN STUART - vander





that music in such a little space and in so few days?

BRIAN MORTON

Huddersfield 2 Stockhausen Celebration

"NEW EXPERIENCES of music in space" — this is what the master promised us in his pre-concert lecture about *Michael's Journey* from *Licht*, Part One of the 60th Birthday Celebration. "I have been searching for a new kind of spatial experience."

I want to have music around people." Now even the traditional instruments in his performances are amplified; Stockhausen's main active role at Huddersfield was sound direction. His acoustic search has led him to hope for a purpose-built auditorium for his work, a "Bayreuth" for his *Licht*-cycle (the first Wagnerian parallel of many). He achieved this during EXPO '70. For tonight, though, it's Huddersfield Town Hall (a beautiful venue) and, later in the week, Huddersfield Sports Centre.

Licht is the operatic cycle Stockhausen has been working on since 1977. There will be an opera for each day of the week. The project is now at the half-way stage; *Michael's Journey Round The Earth* is Act II of *Donnerstag (Thursday)*. "I don't like any more to write *pieces*," he tells us. He is emphatic, disdainful of those still addicted to the small-scale and compartmentalised. Yet — a paradox (and not the last) . . . back in '77 he planned to use

independent works in the *Licht* mosaic. So *Michael's Journey* is complete in itself also, and is now presented in a revised concert version. A 50-minute extended trumpet concerto, maybe?

Certainly the main soloist is Stockhausen's son Markus, a phenomenally gifted trumpet player. (Other family members are also involved.) But the new, self-contained *Michael* is more like a one-act opera with purely instrumental voices and

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exotic percussion backing. The soloists move as they play. The scale of the music-theatre is of course pared down from the La Scala, Milan, premiere of *Donnerstag*. Michael now completes his travels without the use of the rotating globe, the musicians congregating ("like penguins", the composer said) at its South Pole. On the way he has some serious aggro with Lucifer — an extraordinary performance by trombonist Michael Svoboda. But all I think ends happily as Michael dances away with Eve (Suzanne Stephens, basset-horn).

What's perhaps most surprising about *Michael*, and other recent work, is that Stockhausen is actually writing *tones*. Well, themes anyway . . . to represent the various characters (a bit like Wagnerian *leitmotif*, but that's an article in itself). Another paradox — themes mean development and direction yet Stockhausen's Moment Form of the 60s, and



his post-1951 "new epoch" in general, are the antithesis of those concepts. Of course, melody was never the composer's strong point, as the pre-seral pre-1951 works show. But he's working on it now, and the "Michael" and "Lucifer" themes also use lots of odd timbres, plus what Stockhausen called "coloured silences" – breathing and kissing sounds and cves, for Lucifer, breaking off to count out loud, furiously and in German. "He likes the odd numbers," Karlheinz confided as he explained the themes beforehand; yes, the composer's working on his humour too, but you can't help feeling he would have fallen for a letter from Henry Root.

The stunning, compressed performance was, at least for those not attuned to the heavenly lengths of Stockhausen's more recent compositions, the highlight of the Festival. Other events included three concerts of instrumental pieces, including some of the towering *Klavierstücke*, and the fascinating *Harlequin* for choreographed solo clarinet, agilely performed by Ian Stuart. But the other major British premiere, *Sternklang* ("Star Sound") required real stamina and cosmic attunement. Composed back in 1971 for an outdoor venue, Stockhausen has said that the three-hour-long work is "intended as a preparation for beings from other stars and for the day of their arrival". (No, he wasn't joking.) Carrying out cushions into the partly-converted Sports Centre (no seats provided) we make a strange contrast with the regular clientele. As the bell strikes processions of players, led by candle-bearers, wend their way through the audience and take their places in five groups round the hall, behind the foliage thoughtfully provided by the Pennine Garden Centre. Then the vocalising, whisper-



3) ... Is this how to play a bass note? All photos KEITH JAMES

ing and cries begin, accompanied by muted instrumental colourings. In the course of the performance, recorder-playing messengers take new patterns round the groups – music in motion again. The distinction between performers and audience becomes blurred as people start getting up and investigating other groups round the auditorium. One man has brought his dog. They themselves become part of the spectacle they are observing... I hope it enchants the extra-terrestrials, too.

ANDY HAMILTON

Cool Out With Cut Festival 1 Paul Motian Trio Jimmy Giuffrè Quartet

LONDON
HALF MOON

SSSSSH, LET'S hear it for the quiet guys!

Irony really that Ronald Shannon Jackson's trendy tho' defenign cocktail of thud'n-bluster *braggadocio* should have been preceded by two nights of

transfixing delicacy from those unsung masters of time and space, Paul Motian and Jimmy Giuffrè.

Motian is a wonderfully subtle player: not for him the ego-show of lengthy solos or the retreat into mere noise. For half of this concert he used only brushes, yet maintained at all times the basic pulse and joyful buoyancy which prompted Lovano and Fursell to soar free, as if trapezing over a safety-net of percussion.

Stage-right Joe Lovano honked, squealed and blew meltingly lyrical tenor with equal conviction. A large fellow, built like a prop-forward, he'd suddenly burst into dance, as light and graceful as a balloon, his horn gushing phrases like a Texas oil-well. Stage-left Bill Fursell hunched over his fret-board, hair flopping into eyes, distracted smile on face, plucking strings, twiddling knobs with frantic precision. That he's such a fascinating player is partly historical accident: the sonic possibilities of the guitar/electronics marriage are still being charted, and one reason we listen so intently is that we really don't know what extraordinary sounds he'll create from one moment to the next. But the greater part is his own inventiveness; as in the brittle, fragmented lines he strung against Motian's percussive washes, the swathing arcs of chords with which he embraced ballads or, on Monk's "Epistrophy", the brilliant deployment of notes and spaces with which, for a few seconds, he conjured up the spirit of Thelonious himself.

It was their Monks which lingered in this memory – a prowling "Epistrophy", a final encore of "Crepuscule With Nellie", all tense spaces edged with caricatures of melody – plus two great ballads, the elegiac "It Should've Happened A Long Time Ago" and a tender, full-throated "Someone To

Watch Over Me

The next night brought a second hushed revelation courtesy of the Jimmy Giuffrè Quartet, rare visitors to the UK. Fraul-looking and where-haired now, Giuffrè was a revolutionary back in the early 1960s when his *Free Fall* LP proved so dangerously quiet and thoughtful the powers-that-be decided it couldn't be jazz and blackballed him for the next 25 years. Thanks to Soul Note he's back on record at last and, impressed by Weather Report, he's gone electric, via the stalwart bass of Bob Nieske and Pete Levin's fanciful synthesizers.

Levin failed to dent my unclouded prejudice against the lifeless timbres of electronic keyboards, but the rest was magical, from Randy Kaye's gentle drumming the stroked the skins with a lover's caress) to Giuffrè himself, an unassuming virtuoso on flute and bass flute now as well as clarinet, tenor and soprano saxophones, and still blessed with the gift of placing each note just so. His compositions are similarly deft, and as attentive as ever to unusual textural nuance: compact/abstract structures of intriguing curves and spaces, able to accommodate the dreamy nightcape of "Moonlight", the velvet blues of "Cool", the ghostly airs of "Spirits", which slapped from mock-serious to genuinely haunting with immaculate stealth.

Intricate interplay, terse solos, beautiful restraint. Two nights of musical intelligence, sensitivity, integrity that made you want to hang out the flags and believe the human race may have a future, after all.

GRAHAM LOCK

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Cool Out 2

Ronald Shannon Jackson And The Decoding Society Pharoah Sanders Quartet

JACKSON STRIDES on with a demeanour somewhere between Miles and Cecil Taylor, a fashion sense between Ornette and Gary Glitter. Extraordinary. The all-new Decoders stand behind him, a fresh-faced New York street gang, black-clad, dripping with tough-boy chic and gum-chewing cool. They stand around looking uncertainly mean for a few moments and launch into a dense tangle of twisting distorted noise, yowling slide guitar and funky bass. The group is an all-electric, twin bass-and-guitar line-up. Comparisons with Prime Time are inevitable, especially given the Ornetist leanings of Jackson's composing, but Last Exit playing "Lonely Woman" springs to mind as a better point of reference.

Apart from Jackson's inevitable thunderous drumming his two guitarists provide most of the thrills and spills. Jack De Salvo and Jef Lee Johnson are both masterful players, at their best when swooping spiky phrases and fragments in sections of collective improvisation. Sometimes their sparks threaten to shatter the rhythms and compositions completely, until the leader reassures his (too?) rigidly held compositional control. A solo by the initially reticent Johnson turns out to be a marvellous epic exploration of the possibilities and perversions of the blues. He plays unaccompanied for a while and it tumbles and floods out of him: from the audience

it's like spying on something incredibly personal, like someone writing a diary or a love letter.

Of course there is something a bit regressive about all this come-on-boys-let's-get-down-and-boogie thumping rhythm and screaming guitar-solo stuff. Jackson does seem to have backed down from the more extreme world-music eclecticism that gave earlier versions of the Society such a sense of wide openness and possibility. This group is good, but its focus is much narrower. Still, with their brute force and volume they're a difficult team to argue against.

Two days later on a cold London Sunday afternoon, Pharoah Sanders, the genius who somehow never quite was, enters to a hero's welcome and his group break into one of those sprawling African epics that he used to play in the late 60s, after that period of beautiful and terrifying blowing with Coltrane. His hard jaw grips the tenor saxophone, the eyes roll heavenwards, then right up into his skull and an eerie swirling of reed overtones and electronic feedback floods the room. He is a figure of immense dignity, his face as magical and bewitching as his questioning tone — a touch more doleful, more resigned, today than it once was. He burrows deep into the sound and peaks with a roar that still captures that unique balance of the world's beauty and horror.

But then they spoil it all and play a long, foot-clomping, in-the-tradition blues. Pharoah's soloing is good but not that good and pianist Bill Henderson plays a respectful, *tedious* solo that has me looking around the theatre to see if there might not be something more interesting happening somewhere else.

"Naima" is a beautiful old friend greeted with directness, simplicity and love. But this

calm has a chilling undefined quality too, something like the melancholy of loss — or nostalgia?

I would have liked more from Sanders, I wanted him to go further, to break up the forms that have bogged him down for 20 years. But he didn't and I suppose I knew he wouldn't. Like nearly everyone in jazz, he's satisfied with a lot less in these defensive days.

RICHARD SCOTT

Termite Club Festival 1 ESRO Band, Hiby/ Hession, Alan Tomlinson

LEEDS

FIVE GLORIOUS years of The Termite Club, Leeds' now-venerable forum for improvising, celebrated in suitably vigorous style over three days and a number of venues. I made it for the first evening and was impressed to find players and audience as committed as ever to the spirit of a music-making that flies in the face of economics and fashion.

ESRO Band opened proceedings with a characteristically fulgury set. Alan Wilkinson is a real cuss on baritone — he blows past endings and most barriers of taste with outrageous indulgence, but just as often hits on ideas of real passion and eloquence. It's a fine contrast to the infinitesimal scratching of John McMillan's electronics and the spidery guitar figures of Paul Buckton. Slow, rattling music that made you hungry for a bit of melody yet satisfied with its density of ideas.

An operatic duet between Hans Peter Hiby and Paul Hession. The drummer's shifting dynamics were exciting,



MICK BECK conducts FEETPACKETS *Photos by DAVID BOCKING*

but Haby's efforts to outdo even Wilkinson on sax led to a kind of ennuie. He also revives Zorn's blowing-into-buckets-of-water routine, to somewhat less than devastating effect.

Alan Tomlinson stormed away with the whole show. While other exponents of trombone freedom shy away from the instrument's humorous side, Tomlinson insists on it. His solo performance was ripe with raspberries, burks, roars and sheer clowning madness. The horn was dismantled or extended (excited?) with rubber paraphernalia and the resulting crescendo had us all in stitches. But Alan succeeds in tying most of these passages into a personal music too. The sideshow asides throw his more intense monologues into a piercing relief.

When, in conclusion, he teamed with Wilkinson for a duet, they unexpectedly edged

towards a more definite melodic dialogue, along with the anticipated outrage. Finally, we all improvised on 'Happy Birthday To You'.

RICHARD COOK

Termite 2 Feetpackets

COMPOSING FOR improvisers might appear a thankless (not to say paradoxical) task, but judging from Feetpackets' contribution to the Termite Club festival, the effort is worthwhile. Mick Beck, blind tenor player from Sheffield, is the prime mover, though several of the 14 participants — drawn from Hull, Leeds and Bradford as well as Sheffield — contribute compositions. Beck has invented a rudimentary set of gestures for what Burch Morris calls "conductation" (conducted improvisation) and the compositional element is kept stark and simple (eg "the drummer and percussion defy the rhythm/the orchestra is divided into three groups . . .") — I quote from the Feetpackets' booklet.

This simplicity is welcome because Feetpacker composers are not starting from the ideal "blank page" of classical orchestration. Trained in jazz and free improvisation, these musicians can respond to each other with alacrity, interrupt and complement and decorate as the day is long. Beck is cutting his cloth from the finest materials available.

It was an Arts Council bursary of £2,000 that launched Feetpackets (financing a ten-day tour last February); since then the ensemble has become less nervous, more capable of the lush evolutions some of the writing requires. Bero-like "happening" pieces like Linda

Lee Welch's brilliant 'Conver-torio' rub shoulders with the ambitious neo-classicism of Beck's 'Next Symphony'. The musical direction is well judged. The conventional theme-solos-theme structure of bop needs messianic fervour to convince any more. Company-style improvisation responds by grappling with interaction directly, ditching boredom for risk and intensity. Feetpackets retain that directness while developing an unusual stability and softness. This is achieved not by postponing musical decisions (what is usually meant by the term "impressionism") but by a new sense of collective awareness. I am looking forward to the record.

(Booklet [50p] and tape [£3.50] available from Feetpackets, 9 Broomhall Road, Sheffield 10 + 50p p&hp)

BEN WATSON

the subtlety of the flying mallet

THE JAZZ AGE

Jack Cooke recalls the golden years of swing-master

Lionel Hampton, the man who invented good vibes.

Photo by Val Wilmer

WHEN BENNY Goodman phoned Lionel Hampton in 1936 and offered him a job augmenting the Trio, spin-off of the big band, into the Quartet, it was Hampton's chance to step out on to a wider stage. He took it, and in one mighty bound became a jazz "star".

In August 1936 the Goodman Quartet made its first recordings. There's little doubt on this evidence that Hampton was ready for his leap into the big time. Already the technique is secure, the flow of notes across the bars taking in the full range of the instrument, the rhythmic flourishes elegantly dovetailed into Teddy Wilson's piano and Gene Krupa's drums. On "Dinah" — the first tune the Quartet broadcast on Goodman's newly-acquired Camel Cigarettes-sponsored radio show — a tumble of phrases on the stop-time sequence demonstrates Hampton's taste for virtuosity. On "Moonglow", the very first studio recording, he lets the instrument ring, fill out the ensemble, then argues his way with great subtlety around the chord structure before taking off from what was to become a familiar, favourite and deeply traditional figure to plunge deeper into a rich exploration of the song's inherent content. There's no doubt that Hampton had "arrived": but from where exactly had he sprung?

For there were few if any precedents for what he was doing, and not surprisingly, for the vibraphone itself hadn't been around for all that long. An invention of the 1920s and to some extent no doubt related to the wider availability of electrical power outlets, the instrument seems to have been developed as a resource for musical acts on the vaudeville circuit, or for general "novelty" purposes, maybe also to an extent simply for the sake of developing a new product. Thus its genesis is a little different from that of other "modern" instruments like the saxophone — product of a visionary ideal — or the drum kit — product of

practicality. And though it clearly fits into, and derives from, a "family" of instruments — of keyboards struck with mallets — it's not a family that was ever deeply integrated into jazz, or indeed into any European-derived style. The vibraphone, perhaps significantly, has no place in a "section": it's either up-front, on its own, or relegated to the realm of "effects".

WHILE HIS instrument was being developed Hampton, born in 1909, was beginning his musical career playing the bass drum in the children's band sponsored by the *Chicago Defender* newspaper. By 1928 he had got himself to California and by 1930 was playing drums with Les Hite's band at the point at which it was temporarily taken over by Louis Armstrong during his first stay on the West Coast. Armstrong's commercial viability allowed the band to get on to record at the time. It is said that when Hampton played the intro to their recording of "Memories Of You" it was the first time he'd ever played the vibraphone. It's also hard to believe that the guy was only 21 years old at the time, but there it is. Nine or so months later, still with the Armstrong/Hite organisation, on "Shine", there was the clear indication that his playing had developed a greater level of skill.

It just could be that we are dealing with a musician who by the application of pure thought created a unique position for himself. Yet, retrospectively, one of the strongest features of Hampton's career is his ability to borrow or imitate creatively, so it may equally be argued that we are dealing with a musician whose remarkable talents are by no means devalued by a search for sources. It adds to the complexity of the matter, but part of the fascination of jazz is that even at its most straightforward, it



is not a simple music.

So, who may earlier have offered a model? Red Norvo has been mentioned often in the same breath as Hampton, but though there are parallels there is also little influence either way. A far better candidate seems to be a character called Jimmy Bertrand, who was the drummer in Erskine Tate's band at the Vendome Theatre in Chicago when Hampton lived there. Jimmy Bertrand played the xylophone at times. He was a showman, an entertainer in the near-vaudevilian tradition that percussionists in those days often needed to master to work regularly, and it may be that these matters were not lost on young Lionel.

Certainly he joined Goodman not merely as a vibes player, no matter how good, but as something of a showman as well. The Quartet's set from the 1938 Carnegie Hall concert testifies to that. The hilarious "tag" sequence from "I Got Rhythm" is the most obvious indicator, but there is throughout that communication of delight in being before an audience that is now a familiar characteristic of Hampton's work.

Hampton remained with Goodman until 1940 as the last of the "guest stars", seeing the Quartet metamorphose into the Sextet, utilising the regular Goodman rhythm section (including the newly-arrived Charlie Christian) after Gene Krupa and Teddy Wilson had left to pursue their own careers. During this time he also recorded under his own name, and between February 1937 and April 1941 something like 90 titles were produced in this series.

A major feature of the jazz record scene of the middle-to-late 1930s concerns the way in which the record industry economics of the time – mainly the need to maintain the flow of product in the lower-price band of 78s – interacted with the swing era at its zenith to produce several dazzling series of small-band sessions. Teddy Wilson's series on Brunswick started in 1935; Billie Holiday's spin-off series began in 1936 on Vocalion. It was presumably to get a slice of this action – quick, low-cost dates, four sides per session with fair sales potential – that Eli Oberstein at Victor, no doubt bearing in mind that Teddy Wilson managed this along with his gigs with the Goodman Trio and Quartet, backed Hampton as a leader for his own label.

Hampton's understanding of the idiom, and its requirements, is made plain in the first title from the first date, a song called "My Last Affair". Hampton introduces the tune on vibes, using the potential of his instrument and his imagination to decorate at the same time as he states the melody. After a quick burst of Ziggy Elman's trumpet, he then sings the lyric, reflecting a consensus of Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller and Mildred Bailey (who may have invented the whole ethos with her Vocalion sides beginning in 1935). Finally, Hampton returns on vibes to explore the entire harmonic content of the last chord, long held by the saxes.

There's another relaxed, relatively conventional performance on "That Mood That I'm In" (which must have been popular at the time; Teddy Wilson and Billie Holiday recorded a version

ten days later), but already the formalities are being questioned: "Jivin' The Vibes" is a Hampton original of enormous ebullience, then Hampton takes to the drums, spraying rim-shots as if from a machine-gun for the final "Stomp" (later known as "Hampton Stomp"). By the third date, two months later, in April 1937, Hampton is unveiling his piano style, a jabbing, mallet-oriented method which takes no account at all of the long tradition of the pianoforte, simply seeing another keyboard on to which to transpose a varied but essentially percussive art. It's counter-poised by another conventional but gloriously and infinitely detailed version of "Sunny Side Of The Street" which allies Hampton with Johnny Hodges (becoming a tune for which Hodges thereafter frequently got requests, though he didn't record it with Ellington until a decade later).

SEVERAL THINGS are going on simultaneously as the series progresses. Though Hampton may be asserting his style and personality, bringing an edge of showmanship and even danger to the proceedings, equally he was proving himself something of a Stakhanovite: frequently the standard four tracks per session ran to five, and sometimes six . . . from Eli Oberstein's point of view it must have come to seem a good decision. At the same time these inexpensive dates offered cross-fertilisation, not just musically but racially in what was then a very much more rigidly divided society. Also, because the series was recorded in New York mostly, it reflects who was in town at the time. Thus, members of the Ellington band, the Lunceford band, Cab Calloway's as well as Goodman's, and others, are drawn into the sessions. Starriest of the lot is the date from September 1939, which offers Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins, Chu Berry and Ben Webster as a sax section along with Clyde Hart, Charlie Christian, Milt Hinton and Cozy Cole in rhythm, *plus* some early and appropriately insouciant phrases from Dizzy Gillespie. The format doesn't allow them all space to strut their stuff, but it has to be remembered that this is only post-facto an all-star line-up; on the day they were guys earning some money, not much more.

Beyond that, perhaps because of their casual, almost subterranean qualities, these recordings prefigure the progress of swing music without pretence. The sharp, post-Eldridge announcements from Gillespie are counterbalanced by the overheated riffing of "Gin For Christmas", while the early version of "Flying Home" (from February 1940, and already complete with the "tenor madness" passages of later years) joins rather paradoxically with a couple of sets where Hampton appears as leader with the emerging (Nat) King Cole Trio for some attractive but relatively aimless music.

Hampton's Decca recordings, which began when he left Goodman and started up his own orchestra, resist easy analysis. The number of recordings is similar to the Vectors, but these were made over a period of a decade from 1941, a period which covered a drastic revision in not only what jazz did but also how it saw itself. During this time it moved from a position in mainstream entertainment to a more self-aware, art-music stance. In the early stages this perceptual shift and its associated

bebop style was open to interpretation as merely another in a long line of novelties, and certainly items like Hampton's "Hey Ba-Ba Re-Bop" (1945) and "Three Minutes On 52nd Street" (1947) do reflect an attitude that sees bebop in a rather acquisitive way, as something quirky to be popularised as far as possible.

Early performances from the band, like (yet another) "Flying Home" (1942) or "In The Bag" (1942) reflect the influence of Hampton's erstwhile employer, Benny Goodman, while items like "Million Dollar Smile" (1944) or "Empty Glass" (1946) prefigure in their pared-down, neatly opposed section exchanges some of that big-band stylistic homogeneity which subsequently brought the Basie band of the 1950s such acclaim.

Then there are the boogie tracks... mostly variants on "Hamp's Boogie Woogie" (1944), in which Hampton follows Milt Buckner's opening piano into a two-hands-and-two-fingers event against orchestral call-and-responses driven in with sledgehammer vigour. They're rather too easily dismissed as throw-aways, for they do reveal an increasing subtlety of riming and phrasing in Hampton's idiosyncratic piano, while the band parts develop eclectically to the high point of "Beulah's Boogie" (1945) which manages to incorporate clarinet-led tremolos lifted directly from Tommy Dorsey's 1938 "Boogie Woogie" and some high, wild trumpet-section phrases which could have gone on offer to Gillespie's big band to be.

OK, there's a lack of focus: deliberate eclecticism or the absence of an arranger who could have made sense of all this? Maybe simply a matter of solving the problems of the late swing era on a month-to-month basis? Possibly all these and more: we haven't even added in all the "wild cards" yet.

There are lots of these. One, a two-part (78) "Rockin' In Rhythm" (1946), a little crude but remarkably energetic, done before Ellington himself started to ransack his own back catalogue: there's a quintet version of "How High The Moon" (1947) which foreshadows the "easy listening" bebop of the George Shearing Quintet. There's also the better-known "Mingus Fingers" (1947) which steals the clothes of Gillespie's "One Bass Hit" in order to re-dress in some inimitable Charles Mingus voicings (and which shows Hampton trying far more seriously to sort out his ideas about the "new music"). And there's "Blowtop Blues" (1945) which uses vocalist Dinah Washington in what is virtually a reprise of the Billie Holiday late-1930s series, coolly and calmly realised.

YOU MIGHT find if you pursued all this on a musicological basis a state of some confusion. Equally, if you study the discographies you'd find that a lot of interesting people – Dexter Gordon, Johnny Griffin, Kenny Dorham, Benny Bailey, Idrees Sulaiman, Al Grey, Jimmy Cleveland – came and went without really leaving any trace of their presence. Mingus was the only one really to leave his mark behind; maybe it's possible also to count in Albert Ammons, ruggedly fuelling some stunning Hampton thrills on the astonishing "New Central Avenue Breakdown" (1949). The real stars of the Decca series are virtually unknown now. Jimmy Nottingham, Duke Garrette, Arnett

Cobb, Joe Wilder, Marshall Royal, Billy Mackel and – the exception – Illinois Jacquet.

There's only one explanation which makes sense, which draws together all these often contradictory strands, and it had to be a matter of personal experience. On-stage, if you were there – and even the "live" recordings don't convey it at all – Hampton's big band was simply one sensation after another. All difficulties were resolved, all contradictions reconciled; you were just living through whatever aspects of jazz history Hampton cared to interpret for you.

I only got this once: by then, in the mid-1950s, the band was a bit set in its ways, and their determination to entertain at a time when jazz was taking itself rather seriously led the music press to some dodgy reviews, so maybe there could have been greater experiences to be had earlier if you were born lucky and in the right place. But even so, in the town hall of a provincial city it was hard to beat. By the end of the evening the official guardians of culture were beside themselves: the concert had overrun hopelessly, the house lights had been turned up, the stage lights turned off – nothing changed. Hampton was rap-dancing on a 20-inch tom-tom, Eddie Chamblee was lying on the floor, playing tenor and taking his jacket off simultaneously, the band were blasting into their nth version of "Flying Home" as if they'd never seen the chart before. All that preceded this – "Midnight Sun", "Pig Ears And Rice", "Hamp's Boogie Woogie" – convinced you that you were in the presence of aliens: highly organised, gregarious, talented, good-natured if just a little bit frightening, but from a culture whose specific roots you could only guess at while at the same time you were held in an immediacy of contact that didn't really need words or even specific musical notes.

Within this sense of a logic created elsewhere the Decca tracks begin to take on the nature of archaeological fragments, decipherable and informative within a context of acquired knowledge but by no means the coherent evidence of development that we have become conditioned by the LP and modern recording processes to expect from jazz music. They speak about events, and perhaps a view of the world, to which nowadays we have no immediate access.

RECORD GUIDE

Hampton's recordings with Benny Goodman were done for Victor. This label has always had a good reissue programme. The Carnegie Hall performances came out on Columbia originally (later CBS) so they might be a bit more difficult to find. Hampton's own Victor recordings reappeared on RCA's "Black & White" series, then on "Jazz Tribune" double-album sets; now I think they're also out in three Bluebird boxes. There's also a good sampler *Hamp The Champ* in the lower-price RCA Jazz Edition single-album series. The Deccas have never, as far as I'm aware, been subject to any comprehensive reissue programme, which is sad. However, Affinity do have two albums from this period, *Riding On The L&N* and *In The Bag*, which can be obtained without dredging the second-hand racks, and are well worth it.



tenor in the twilight zone

Andy Sheppard's long-awaited second Lp *In-*

troductions In The Dark is released this month. Fly-on-the-studio-wall Kenny Mathieson reveals the lighter moments behind Andy's art of darkness. Photography by Patrick Gorman.

IT IS Monday at noon on the first day of recording Andy Sheppard's new album, and the saxophonist and myself are sharing a cab from the hotel to the Angel Recording Studio in Islington, where producer Steve Swallow has been hard at it since nine that morning, trying to get a sound for drums, percussion and keyboards. The previous night, over dinner at manager John



Cumming's flat, Andy had been undecided which of the six tunes would be first on tape, but had now made a firm choice.

It was to be "Romantic Conversation Between A Dancer And A Drum," the 24-minute, beautifully structured composition which would take up an entire side of the album, and the cut which, along with the high-energy "Rebecca's Glass Slippers", is likely to prove toughest to get down. Even though it has been honed on the road, it presents a real challenge, while the three new players (vibist Orphy Robinson had been on the preceding three gigs) brought in for the session only encountered the piece for the first time at the weekend rehearsals.

"I decided that I wanted to write a longer, structured piece, in which the tune was the thing," Andy explains. "We got good reviews on the first album, but one critic in particular - someone I have a lot of respect for - criticised the lack of melodies. I always thought that one of the strengths of the band was that it was very melodic, but that made me wonder if maybe the melodies were not as strong or as obvious as I thought, so I decided right then I was going to write a long, melodic piece for the next album."

"It evolved in its current form on the road, which is always the case with any of my tunes - I added the end section, for example, during the Red Stripe tour, because it just didn't sound right as it stood. I am always slightly embarrassed at being called a composer. The process is much more like putting together a montage of bits and pieces I have assembled over a period of time."

We discuss the merits of shortening the title to "Romantic Conversation", but I'm all for the Mingusian resonance of the long version. Andy is psyched up and ready to go on this one, but when we reach the spacious converted church, the initial set-up is still under way. Two hours later, engineer John Timperley and Swallow are still sorting out levels, John Cumming has just delivered a new set of timbales to percussionist Mamadi Kamara, necessitating further set-up changes, and Alex the piano tuner has gone AWOL.

Amid this confusion, the first blow of the session occurs when John suddenly realises that Angel do not have any stock of the 14" tape spools necessary to encompass the 20-minute length of the piece (the extra four are recorded separately, but that's another story). An urgent order is placed, but it will be tomorrow before they arrive. A morning's planning goes out the window.

Alex finally shows up at 3.30, in pin-stripe suit and bow-tie underneath his leather motor-cycle jacket and crash-helmet. At last the session is ready to go, even if it is not with the intended tune. Instead, Andy decides they must tackle "Rebecca's Glass Slippers", rather than ease in with a less demanding opener. The tape rolls, Steve announces take one, and off they go.

It's a good start. Everybody slots quickly into the frantic groove of the piece, and they get down a solid take, if not perhaps the definitive one. Vibraphonist Orphy Robinson breaks a mallet in full flight, and the falling head sounds an A flat when he was supposed to be on A natural ("Well, it's an expensive game, this music business," Swallow tells him). Andy thinks he

heard a wrong note on the intro. Let's do it again straight off.

Take two is storming along in spectacular fashion and sounds much better, until a sudden flapping turns all heads in the control room to the Ampex recording unit in the corner. The loose tape end is whirling around the exhausted spool. The band, oblivious, play through to the end of the tune, and receive the news with general disbelief.

To add to the exasperation, guitarist Chris Watson cannot be at the studio in the evening; but there is time for one more take before he has to leave. Andy's frustration is tempered by the fact that he always felt this would be the toughest of all to crack. Still, take three falls a little flat. Dave Adams's simplified percussion part does not come off, and Orphy's misfortune continues when his headphones fall on to the vibes. It has hardly been the perfect start.

In the event, it proves to be a false augury. The first two takes of "Rebecca" will eventually produce a scintillating final mix.

THE QUINTET have been on the road with most of this music for nine months, and it shows in their tight-knit ensemble understanding, the way in which they fall almost automatically into the complex harmonic shifts and rhythmic twists of Andy's fast developing compositions. The writing is already noticeably more sophisticated than on his debut album, and he is taking much greater chances in that sphere. The basic unit is augmented by Orphy, who also played on the first album, and three more musicians, all of whom Andy had played with in the George Russell Orchestra.

As it turned out, guitarist Chris Watson and Dave Buxton knew each other from a brief acquaintance in a holiday-camp band years before. Sheppard: "Yeah. The other guys recruit their players from Berklee graduates, but mine come from Pontins..."

Drummer Simon Gore, the band's ascetic (a non-smoker and non-drinker who eats, sleeps and plays drums), is at the top of the main studio floor, behind baffle screens, with the huge pipe organ retained when the former church was converted looming behind him. Andy himself is just in front of the drummer, while synthesiser player Steve Lodder faces them from the opposite end of the studio, with guitarist Chris Watson off to his right.

"I didn't really want a synth sound to begin with," Andy admitted later. "In fact, when we talked about it at breakfast before the first rehearsal, Steve Swallow asked if I wanted a synth sound and I said no. At that first rehearsal, though, I asked Steve Lodder just to try it out, and I thought it sounded great. In the case of the guitar, it was more because I have been listening to guitar players a lot recently. I think it is a very expressive instrument, and people are playing it in a very exciting way now, like Bill Frisell. I think Pat Metheny makes great records as well. There are so many technical and textural possibilities with the instrument that I liked."

Pianist Dave Buxton and bass player Pete Maxfield share a room on the top left corner of the studio, diagonally opposite additional percussionist Dave Adams. The band's regular percussion wizard and resident medicine man, Mamadi Kamara, stares



*A glass of golden
Cockspur Rum helps
ward off the chill
of a Caribbean evening.*



As the sun slips down in the evening, I like to wrap up in my shirt and hat.

That's the time I usually sit out on the verandah with some good company and a bottle of golden Cockspur Rum.

It's smooth and mellow and tastes good neat, on the rocks or with dry ginger ale.

And it's the ideal way of warming the atmosphere when you're drinking with friends.

In fact it must work well because I don't recall spending a chilly evening in Barbados yet!

Monty Cumberbatch,
Bath, St. John, Barbados.



If you like drinking you may like the taste of smooth Cockspur Rum.



the session in a low-ceilinged room opposite the pianist, but they decide after the first day to switch him into the higher room initially occupied by the vibes and marimba of Orphy Robinson, as an aid to bringing out the full sound of his superb set of congas.

The decision to go with a nine-piece band has been a brave one, but it is not without its problems. The headphone mixes are difficult to achieve throughout the session, and Pete identifies the real difficulty with this later that night in the hotel bar — "A lot of how well we play in this music depends on how well we are able to hear."

Dave Buxton's reservation is a more fundamental one, for while he likes what the additional musicians are doing, he pines for the quintet sound they have painfully evolved over the preceding months. He can't quite explain his objection. "It feels different."

Andy, though, has no doubts about the expanded group, nor why he wanted them.

"I wanted the extra tonal and textural possibilities that I could hear happening on these tunes, especially on 'Romantic Conversation', but I decided very early on that I didn't want to overdub synthesiser or percussion, which is what I would have had to do if we had just used Mamadi, for instance."

"I wanted to record it as near live as possible, and even more importantly, I wanted the sound on this record to be contemporary, to sound like *today*, which is why I wanted that mix of electric and acoustic instruments, guitar as well as synthesiser. Making a record in the studio is a special thing — it's not the same as just capturing the band live in the moment."

That final sentiment is echoed by Steve Swallow, who sees the recording studio itself as an additional instrument in creating that special dimension which adds up to a studio-produced record. The whole business, he admits, is a consuming one: "Maybe I just haven't been doing it long enough to have learned to coast through it yet," he shrugs.

"Just as any of the players out there," he tells me later in the week, gesturing to the studio floor, "could have badly screwed up this session, I could too. I was very conscious of that as we were recording, especially when I knew that the guys had played this stuff well, and that it had been recorded properly. After the last note is played, the spotlight shifts very directly, right into my eyes. I've been victimised by bad mixes myself, and I know how angry I was when I heard them."

Maybe a musician who has been screwed over himself is the ideal person to be a producer?

"Maybe so! I sure have sympathy with the guy it happens to! Production is a service occupation, although I used to say that about bass playing too. But this is not my record, it's Andy's, and I think it would be real unfortunate for Andy if I didn't keep that in mind. It has a creative side for me as well, which goes back to using this stuff," he says, sweeping his hand around the control booth, "like an instrument of sorts. I think some of the rewards I get from this are exactly the same as the ones that are available to me as a player, but most of the rewards are in the process itself. It's really fun."

THAT FIRST evening, the band lay down three versions of "Where The Spirit Takes You", an extra track for the compact disc which requires only the quintet plus Steve Lodder. Andy doesn't like his effort at playing on the extremes of the saxophone's natural range on the out theme second time round, but Swallow points out that he is not supposed to be playing there anyway. "You can't complain if fate kicks your ass when you try."

After dinner, a drummerless septet lay down two takes of "Forbidden Fruit", a new tune written for a television documentary; we listen to the second in the control room while Mamadi wanders around the studio, playing his berimbau and preparing himself for his big challenge. The second sounds good, but Steve suggests a third "in case you haven't peaked". They have.

Andy and Mamadi then have the studio to themselves, in an attempt to tape the opening section of "Romantic Conversation", which features the saxophonist on wood flutes and the percussionist on berimbau and vocal.

Mamadi is clearly very nervous about the vocal contribution, not helped by the general mirth over his dilemma; eventually, they settle on doing three takes of the piece with instruments only, and Mamadi eventually lays down a separate four-part vocal the following night.

The session eventually ends with midnight looming. Steve Swallow has been working for 15 hours, and Andy for 12. It sets the pattern which everyone will follow for the rest of the week. Who said the musician's life was glamorous? (*Yeah, but my baby takes the morning train, works from nine to five and then . . .* — Ed.)

ON TUESDAY, the band go straight into the postponed take of "Romantic Conversation" (codename: Dirty Talk), and for all its highly-structured complexity, proceed to lay down two beautifully judged cuts of the piece, which will eventually be mixed and matched in the editing suite to produce the album version.

Dave Buxton is unhappy with his solo on the first take.

"There's one point where I'm doing a run along the piano, and it sounds as if I fell off a cliff."

But he admits that the second one is "OK", pushing Swallow to comment that he is beginning to suspect that when Dave says "OK", "It's the equivalent of one of my New York friends saying 'I played fuckin' great on that one.'"

After the disappointment of the first afternoon, the satisfaction at having produced such excellent results has everyone in buoyant mood. Andy asks for volunteers to sing a choral harmony on the introduction. How about you, Dave?

"I don't know about singing," the pianist replies. "I find talking a challenge . . ."

Swallow breaks up the party.

"Beautifully played, guys. So it's on to 'Optics' without any further ado. After all, you've been sitting there for 20 minutes . . ."

Following the euphoria, "Optics" proves more difficult, with

the first two cuts not really capturing the crucial relaxed but vigorous groove of the tune. "I think we may have to do this one four or five times," Swallow tells me, "until the guys get tired enough and *have* to lay back on it."

"This was my 1988 version of 'Java Jive'," Andy explains later, "which is my favourite from the first album. I like the groove, and the way the whole thing rides along, and I wanted to do something in a kind of similar mode to replace it. The structure on this one works well, I think, but it kind of took care of itself. It would be nice to try it on tenor live, but that would take it into a whole different area. It's very difficult to get the tempo exactly right on this tune — a degree either way and it sounds either as if it has lead boots on, or is just going crazy."

The third take, though (the only one they actually keep, having taped directly over the first two), is the one. Still buoyant, they cut another version of "Spirit", and try out a new quintet ballad, "Filofax In Blue", before giving over the evening session to getting Mamadi's Sierra Leone solo male voice choir down on tape.

It's been another long day, but the hard work has been justified, with takes of everything which will be needed for the record already in the can, and the luxury of a third day of recording to do patches, and the odd re-takes in the hope of some small improvements (in the event, first takes are mostly the ones used, although sometimes with splices). The pressure is off, though: the album is all but down on tape, even if the long and difficult chore of mixing still faces Steve, Andy and John Timperley.

THERE ARE no rules for mixing and editing. The whole business is very much a process of trial and error — "I know of no other way," Swallow says, and the engineer agrees — in choosing the takes to be used, the edits to be made, the patches to be inserted, the levels to be established for each instrument in the final sound picture.

Both Swallow and Timperley are fastidious and meticulous in their work, assisted by a tape operator who is universally known as Carb, short for Carbolite (don't ask). It is a painstaking business.

Typically, Steve and Andy will study the monitor mixes on cassette in the hotel at night (this after a recording or mixing session going on till nearly midnight), and arrive at their decisions on preferred takes and possible substitutions, then discussed in the morning. The final decisions will then be acted upon in the editing room, and the fine tuning of the instrumental mix achieved by the aforesaid trial and error, with continual minute adjustments of relative levels in the mix.

The physical process of cutting and splicing tape is a precise and time-consuming science, not to say heavy on the consumption of the tape-op's most important tool, single-sided razor blades, since Carb is of the "one blade, one cut" school of thought on the matter.

Elsewhere, there is much discussion about "fattening the tenor sound a smidgin" on "Spirit", with minute adjustments back and forth, and much serious deliberation as to precisely which

gradient of fattening is quite the right one.

The problem, I suggest to Steve, is that after a certain point the vast majority of listeners are unlikely to hear any difference, a point which he accepts — part of the art of production, he suggests, is "learning to ignore details beyond a certain point of finesse", because you end up just getting struck on them".

They finished on schedule, seven days after it all began. A week is barely running-up time by rock standards, but it is fairly generous for a jazz record (Swallow contrasts it with the two days for an ECM recording — "you have to really be ready when you go in there, because you don't get to fix it the next day").

Nevertheless, the time and budget restrictions did leave one frustration for the saxophonist. Andy particularly wanted a repetitive three-note figure played by Dave Adams on the difficult Brazilian percussion instrument the *kuvenga*, but Dave found it impossible to sustain the figure over the necessary number of bars. Andy's suggestion that they record one perfect figure and then loop it is dismissed on grounds of time and cost. He accepts the decision, but confides later that he really wanted that sound on the record, and knows that on a rock album, it would have happened.

"Making a record is such an intense process," Andy concludes. "There is a lot of pressure to get it done, and then it gets held against you for ever. Almost everything was played live, though, there was hardly any over-dubbing, and that was very important. There are some edits, of course, but I'm happy with that — I think they will make it a better record to listen to."

"Next year I would like to do a couple of records, one in duo settings with different people, perhaps working with more African musicians or whatever, which I think would be interesting, and the other one with a big band. I have a work in progress with that in mind, which I'm scoring for two drummers and things like cello and brass, which will give me even more scope to develop the textural thing. If it happens . . ."

SHEPPARD HAS emerged as the strongest and most imaginative of all the new British saxophone stars (although, to be fair, he has a head start on most of them), but the most dramatic improvements have taken place in the band, which has grown in authority to a remarkable degree in the year and two months between recordings.

I remain convinced that the new jazz must, as a matter of the highest priority, develop as more of an ensemble music than the now overworked bop model on which most of it is at least initially based, and Andy's quintet are already demonstrating the value of working in a settled unit, rather than with casually recruited sidemen or -women.

If he readily admits that his attractive, melodic writing has not developed as far as his saxophone playing, it is demonstrably improving all the time. His easy-going manner off-stage can sometimes disguise the degree of intense dedication which Sheppard brings to the music once he has the horn in his hands; even a cursory listen to the new album should dispel any doubts about his absolute determination to progress as far as he can possibly go in his chosen music.



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Jack DeJohnette

GIVING IT STICK

*The great drummer raps out his
scrapes and 'scapes to Richard Cook.*

Computer image by Paul Butler.

THERE'S SOMETHING about the great drummers which sets them apart from the jazz hierarchy. Elvin, Blakey, Max, Sunny, Milford: they loom like giants over the turmoil of post-bop jazz. Drummers have been the great liberators, the men who opened out the rhythms, spread the time, gave the music a grand freedom. Would Coltrane have sounded the same without Elvin Jones producing the terrific cannonade behind him? Could Miles Davis have plumbed the mysterious depths of his 60s band without Tony Williams shuffling the time asunder?

Jack DeJohnette studied on both of those drummers, and subsequently played with both of those leaders. Twenty-odd years later, he's a significant drummer and leader himself. He has a story about coming to New York for the first time, sitting in with Hank Mobley and Kenny Dorham, and seeing the trumpeter leap offstage at the end of the tune and shout – "Where'd this cat come from?" Jack must have been pretty good already. Today, he's among the masters of the kit.

His newest record, *Audio Visualscapes* (released last autumn by MCA in America, but – disgracefully – not scheduled for release here), is a sprawling, vividly coloured set, 75 minutes of music that states the art in a certain kind of jazz. DeJohnette's group, Special Edition, put their trust in severe, virtuoso playing, superb workmanship, where classic tenets run in tandem with contemporary possibilities. That is – the leader involves synthesizers and fusion forms into what's at heart a sophisticated post-bop blowing band. "PM's AM", a dedication to Pat Metheny, defines the format. The composition pivots on some handsome chord changes and an attractive keyboard wash, but gets its vital fluids from the graphic intensity of the soloists (Gary Thomas, Greg Osby, Mick Goodrick) and the drummer's fizzing stricks.

Special Edition has been together for a couple of years now. When they played at the final Bracknell Jazz Festival, they took apart most of the rest of the bill in terms of sheer impact. While Thomas and Osby unrolled supercharged vocabularies on alto and tenor, DeJohnette was in kingly command at the centre. His shades glittering in the afternoon sun, reflecting the light of cymbals that sizzled in constant motion, he drove the music with titanic calm and certainty.

If the intensity of the group sometimes seems one-celled, *Audio Visualscapes* extends their range, from the cooling ballad form of "Donjo" to the slaughtering rush of "The Sphinx" and the improvised title piece.

"This record is important," says the drummer. He's a broad, athletic-looking man with big hands, a strong face, narrow eyes. His voice is deep and foggy. When he's amused, he chuckles slowly, rather like Dexter Gordon. "We toured all during 1987, and we were a lot tighter when we made this one. The band is displayed as more of a unit than it was on *Irresistible Force* (their previous album), and the horn players explore what I think is the untelligent use of electronics in improvised music."

Both Osby and Thomas use occasional electronic colour on their horns: it doesn't hurt. The double-album format is a useful luxury, too, with the tracks as open-ended as everyone wanted. They wind it up with a 14½-minute improvisation, actually

edited down from 29 minutes of blowing. Why the cuts?

"Because we had so much other music. Even after editing it down, we had enough to fill a CD. Otherwise, we'd have had to go to a second CD, which cost-effectively..." Jack laughs and claps his hands. You have to think about business as well as art.

BORN IN 1942, Jack DeJohnette qualifies as one of the most experienced of modern drummers. He played piano and sax before turning to the drums in his native Chicago, and though he was involved in the AACM in its early days, his first important gig was as drummer with Jackie McLean; unfortunately, none of their recordings is in print, but if you can find *Jackie or It's Time*, you'll hear his dramatic early style set next to the altoist in one of his most striking periods.

"I was young and cocky. I was playing too loud. In between sets, Jackie called me and said, look man, can you hear what I'm playing? If you can't hear me, drop down the volume. I was kind of hostile. I said, well, Elvin Jones plays loud. He said, yeah, that's Coltrane, and what he's playing demands that. I'm not Coltrane. I thought about it and decided he was right."

"Drums are an instrument that can overpower other instruments very easily, if they're not used with compassion and sensitivity to what's going on. Horn players have to play harder to compete with that, and you have to find a way to give them a lift without overpowering them. That's something I've really worked hard on, to do what I have to do and give the soloist some help."

Is it easy to find good players? There've been some great sidemen in his bands – John Abercrombie, Lester Bowie, Chico Freeman, John Purcell.

"It's not easy. Thing is, I can play with a lot of players and make them sound good. I have to find players that make me sound good, heh heh!"

"Players like Abercrombie, Dave Holland, Wayne Shorter, Keith Jarrett – the Standards trio, that's an exceptional situation. But these are people who are established. With younger players, it's a matter of developing. I played with Coltrane, Miles, Sonny Rollins, the highest level. It takes a while to develop that kind of level."

"I have a good rapport with John Surman. I met him years ago, through the drummer Stu Martin, in that group The Trio with Barre Phillips. He had this synthesizer that looked like a chessboard and you stuck pins in it to make up a programme. I suggested recording John to ECM some while back. Then we wound up in some performing situations doing some duets and it worked out very well. Now we're doing this tour – major jazz tours in England are rare, you know."

We know. They're an unlikely pair, the Devon soliloquist and the fierce Chicagoan drummer. As imposing a leader as he is, DeJohnette is in tremendous demand as a sideman. Major dates with Mike Brecker, Tommy Smith, Pat Metheny and Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett and others have helped to fill his work diary over the last couple of years. Are there too many calls for him to handle?

"Sometimes the phone doesn't ring at all. Which is nice. I'm

Jack DeJohnette

one of the few players who's happy when it doesn't ring. I can spend time at home with my family, write, socialise. Doing different projects keeps me in shape."

Like every musician earning a decent if unspectacular living from this kind of music, DeJohnette is aware of how far he can go. If he wanted a major crossover success, he says, he'd have to get Phil Collins in to sing on a couple of tracks. Even then you can't guarantee to crack it.

"I don't have a formula for that. I know what you can do. It can work for you and against you, because of what you've established prior to that. Miles had that situation, transferring from traditional swing to pop and electronic backbeats. He got a young audience and never looked back. But he's always played pop tunes. He's changed the band's format, but that's part of his thing. Nobody can phrase a melody like him. He can bring out the best in musicians. That's what I'm trying to do with Special Edition and all the bands that I've had."

THE DRUMMER was fortunate in his time with ECM. Having been introduced to the label on the early records which John Abercrombie made – *Gateway* and *Timeless* are still impressive for his cymbal and snare interplay, an attention to sonic detail that Manfred Eicher's production was the first to do justice to – he was given the opportunity to do a series of albums which built a formidable repertoire of tunes and ensemble styles. *New Rags*, *New Directions*, *Tin Can Alley* and *Album Album* document how jazz grew out of the 70s and into the 80s: an increasing awareness of what a sophisticated small group could do.

He was already a scintillating player when he made his first records as a leader, for Prestige and Milestone. The ECM albums become a showcase for his intimidating talent: he traces an unswerving course for a group, his playing moving in a hard, direct line accentuated by furiously fast rolls. It's a very even, distinct manner. The drum parts for the title piece of *New Rags* or "Third World Anthem" on *Album Album* show how DeJohnette refined the looseness of Williams and Jones into a brilliant, cutting attack where every stick stroke has its point to make.

Now, though, he's moved to MCA. Many of his colleagues have been expatriates in company terms, even if they've been living in the USA. For a decade or more, European records have been documenting American work better than any US label. But maybe the tide is turning back again.

"Radio is starting to change its formats," he says. "They're trying to diversify and hold listeners. I remember the early 70s, when bands recorded 20-minute cuts, which was great for the jocks – they could go out and get coffee. But that was a hell of a time. Things really opened up and the formats broke away from three- and four-minute things."

He shrugs. It's difficult to measure change. Special Edition is a logical evolution of his 70s bands, but what can be wearying is the incessant superhumanity of the band. There's so much power laid down that even the drummer's attention to light and shade passes by on some listenings. Occasionally, you long for someone to slip up. The title piece on the new record is an impassioned improvisation, but in the end it sounds almost driven into the

ground. There's not much genuine freedom with the saxophonists winding up on riff figures while DeJohnette thunders on.

It's his softer side that deserves to get a better hearing. "Silver Hollow", from *New Directions*, is an enchanting ballad which is still in his book (Jack loves to update pieces: two of his four originals on *Visionscapes* are reworkings of old themes), and his piano playing – he trained as a classical pianist – is accomplished enough to merit more than the occasional glimpses he allows on record.

"There's a physical thing that's involved," he says, thinking about the transition between instruments, "and there's composition. I have to think in terms of applying the harmonic end of the rhythmic concept of my drumming to composition. It takes a little while."

"If I was more involved with that, people might say I sound more like Keith [Jarrett]. But he's a very drummatic sort of player, in terms of placement of rhythm. It's just a matter of time before I put my conception of drums on to piano, playing with time. I like melodic conceptions, though. Like on 'Irresistible Forces', that type of piece, there's about five or six counter-melodies going on. But it's subtle. My compositions aren't easy to just sit down and play with."

That's well-said. Jack DeJohnette's working at a high level now. In the Standards trio, which has had musicians gasping at the intensity and technical bravado, and his own olympian bands, the drummer is working on the cutting edge of new acoustic-electric jazz. But he's still, in some ways, an old-fashioned player, a practitioner from an earlier age, tapping at skin and metal to create his music.

"It's still difficult for drummers like myself and Tony Williams to keep this style happening. Carrying all this equipment around. The only exception is Art Blakey, who stays on the road forever. I don't want to do that. You have to kick back and recharge your batteries."

"You don't accomplish a lot by being out playing all the time. A lot of people see you, but there's such a thing as road fatigue. It seems I'm doing a lot, but I have to pull back. Enough! I want to have more to give."

RECORDS

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- TIN CAN ALLEY (ECM)
- IMMUTABLE FORCES (ECM)
- ALBUM ALBUM (ECM)
- SOVI (Pat Metheny, ECM)
- THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF SIMON SIMON (John Surman, ECM)
- SONG X (Pat Metheny & Ornott Coleman, Geffen)
- STANDARD VOLS 1 & 2 (Keith Jarrett, ECM)
- IRRESISTIBLE FORCES (MCA)
- AUDIO VISIONSCAPES (MCA)

Jack DeJohnette is on tour with John Surman during February. See Club Dates for details.

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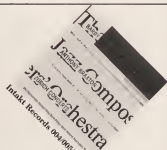
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JAZZ

beard turning grey. Producer Steve Backer's fight for

jazz in major record companies has brought us the twice-born

Novus label, plus the Savoy, Freedom and Bluebird reissue series.

He recounts the cut and thrust of boardroom battles with

corporate philistines to fellow greybeard Brian Priestley.

"IN THE music business, in those two words alone, one word is aesthetic and the other word is commerce. And it's an art-commerce balance."

An aside in the otherwise smooth flow of conversation from Steve Backer. But it was an aside that defined the rest of the conversation, and even the existence of the speaker. A soft-spoken, bearded and bespectacled, 40-ish American, Backer is executive producer of RCA's jazz and fusion output, and previously filled the same role at ABC/Impulse (1972-74) and Arista (1974-80).

His enthusiasm and musical idealism were quickly revealed by my mention of the dean of jazz producers, the late John Hammond. "Hammond is my hero. I think when you're in this business, though, you have an obligation to try to be as objective as possible about the music that you document. My own personal tastes at home maybe enter into the documentation once in a while, but very rarely."

He's been in the business long enough to know, however, that what producers can do is often limited by the commerce factor.

"Major record companies stopped around 1979 and did not really re-emerge, in productive recording of jazz, until around 1983-84. So in that period, all the smaller companies were doing the documentation. The economy in America was in a severe recession, plus, let's say, mistakes that were made in the record business on a pop level can tend to force the mentality from one of logic and reason to one of panic. When that happens, the more aesthetic dimensions of the music business, and the less commercial things, suffer."

Jazz didn't have a high profile in 1969, either, when Steve Backer started as a pop promotion person.

"You see how it all goes down, on a wholesale level, on a retail level. You're interfacing with the press and with radio all the time, and with retailers as well if you're good at what you do. Which is a great foundation. Then I decided I wanted to specialise in music that's close to my heart. They really don't like it when you do that in this business, but I needed to do it."

Some of that promotional foundation was put to good use at Impulse, and got Steve from National Promotion Director to General Manager in six months. "What I did was I organised a couple of regional tours and then a national tour for what were considered at that time some pretty outside artists, people that I signed like Keith Jarrett and Gato Barbieri. And some more

experimental artists like Sam Rivers and Dewey Redman and Marion Brown, plus Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp and Alice Coltrane, who were already on the label. They were corporate-sponsored tours, and this had never been done for this music. And they were promotionally oriented and they ended up catalysing sales."

When another minor recession caused the corporate wind to change direction, Backer proposed a jazz strategy for Arista, then being set up by Clive Davis. One of Davis's earliest executive appointments, Steve contracted Anthony Braxton and fusionists such as the Brecker Brothers to the main label and leased the Freedom series, with names such as Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor in its output. Naturally, some of this wide spectrum sold less like hot cakes than hot potatoes.

"The Brecker Brothers' first album, in America, sold about 100,000 albums and the second album about a quarter of a million. Whereas with an Anthony Braxton or a Cecil Taylor or any jazz, even in the mainstream — with exceptions — you're dealing with a maximum of 20,000, more likely ten or 15,000. Of course, if you have commercial hits like Grover Washington does, you're talking about two or three million albums... Financial and more legal-oriented people within the corporations tend to say, well, this artist is not doing so well, so why do we go on? so you try to fight it from the 'balance' angle, that one type of music is paying for another. A lot of fights you have to have on that level. You see this whole section of grey in my beard? That's what we're talking about right now."

Thanks to Backer, Arista also purchased the dormant Savoy label whose repackaging (much of it still around) was probably the first US reissue series to emulate European and Japanese standards of expertise. Then, after the three-year Freedom deal, Arista continued to cover the fusion-to-avant field by founding Novus.

But then came 1979 and jazz lost out to the corporate mentality. Backer took a year off "to eliminate burnout", and eventually returned to build up the promotion of Windham Hill ("Not jazz but an interesting phenomenon", he says, although before he left in 1986 he had started a jazz subsidiary, Magenta). What led him to RCA was the promise of another Arista-ish situation but, with among other things a huge back-catalogue starting from the Original Dixieland Band, he has still only scratched the surface. Nevertheless, his reissue series (Bluebird) is nearing 50 albums, covering pre-war swing alongside Mingus, Ornette and Braxton.

And he has relaunched Novus for contemporary jazz and new-age, including Henry Threadgill and Michael Gregory (formerly M.G. Jackson) who were both with the first Novus. Of them, and keyboardists Hilton Ruiz, Adam Makowicz and Amina Claudine Myers, he says, "They're all artists that I feel are significant and important to document." And James Moody? Maybe an example of Steve's own personal tastes, but there also turns out to be a good business reason.

"The last James Moody album on an American label was ten years ago, while Steve Lacy hasn't had an album on a major American label in 25 years! That's kinda criminal."

THE NEW GROVE DICTIONARY OF JAZZ

Edited by Barry Kernfeld
(Macmillan, two vols, £225)

ANY ACCURATE review of this work would need months of work. I've skimmed the whole thing, read as many individual entries as I've had time and interest to, and have probably scratched no deeper than the surface of the 1,400 pages. The scope and detail of the research are as formidable as that in any of the previous Grove projects. There are about 3,000 individual musician entries, backed up with a mass of material on instruments, venues (the nightclub section is a remarkable achievement in itself), styles and musical methods. A number of major essays tie the thousands of loose ends together.

Simply as a work of reference, then, this surpasses any previous compendium of jazz scholarship. If I want to look up Gene Quill, Alvin Queen, Charlie Queener, Benoit Quersin, Howdy Quickell or Paul Quinchette, I need only turn to Vol 2 page 340, where I'll be told all I'll probably ever need to know. Sometimes, though, it's not *what* you know, it's...

For even a comparatively cursory exploration of the books reveals an uneasy editorial stance. Barry Kernfeld explains his premise in a comprehensive introduction to the work, and some of his notes suggest a laudable attempt to focus clearly on jazz rather than jazz-related musics. Hence the omission of George Gershwin or Blind Lemon Jefferson (though I can hardly agree that Jeff Beck has had a "significant association" with any jazz style and should therefore be included). But categorisation has always been jazz's cardinal problem, within and without. The idea of a musical-cultural matrix, ingeniously expounded by Max Harrison in *The New Grove Gospel, Blues And Jazz*, never comes to the fore in the wider articles in the encyclopedia. James Lincoln Collier's central essay on jazz itself pursues instead a conservative and rather old-fashioned view of the music's development and resources.

This fundamental reserve permeates a great deal of the text. One could dwell on omissions, although there seem to be few. But it's what is included which is sometimes culpable. Too many contemporary players receive either indifferent comment or a downplayed hostility.

Leo Smith is described (by Kernfeld) like this: "Smith's preference for music that displays lyricism, pleasing timbres and sustained calmness sets him apart from many of his colleagues in free jazz." I might be witch-hunting, but that sounds to me like "at least there's someone who plays listenable free music" (and the distinction between free jazz and improvised music is never made, so most of the European improvisers receive inferior comment). I'd say that Joe McPhee and Charles McPherson are players of about equal significance; McPhee, the more radical player, rates 17 lines and no real comment, while McPherson, on the same page, is allowed 44 lines and an emotive description ("characteristic dulcet warmth").

Random examples, but not misleading of the whole. Perhaps the army of contributors enlisted by Kernfeld make an impressive number without including enough of those writers who have come to grips with contemporary jazz at its most demanding. I don't know if Kernfeld approached Gary Giddins, John Litweiler, Brian Morton, Graham Lock, Kevin Whitehead, Richard Cook, Francis Davis or Jack Cooke about contributing; at any rate, none of them does. Its best qualities make this a valuable, absorbing and considerable achievement. What lets it down — although, as I mentioned at the start, this is something of an interim report — is the stance it chooses to take on such a complex music. As a purely factual book of reference, it's probably definitive.

MIKE FISH

THE DEATH OF RHYTHM & BLUES

by Nelson George
(Omnibus, £12.95)

NELSON GEORGE, self-described "B-Boy intellectual" and one of pop culture's few black writers of note, has written a book which (sort of) argues that the rhythm & blues tradition in black America is dead. Even he admits this sounds a little drastic but makes no apology for his tone.

George says that the sound and subculture which grew out of post-war, post-big-band jump blues and evolved through (to take random examples) Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, Jackie Wilson, Berry Gordy, James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Prince have

gradually been compromised, diluted and eroded by their assimilation into a white-dominated industry and a white-dominated society. From the off, moreover, he stresses that this is as much a socioeconomic, political argument as it is a musical one.

For George, the question of assimilation versus separation goes back to the debate between those seminal black figures Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. du Bois in the early years of this century. Washington, hardly a radical, propounded a view of black economic self-sufficiency and segregation where du Bois, for all the militant rhetoric of his National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples, wanted acceptance within the context of white power. With the gradual and perhaps inevitable success of the du Bois philosophy, says George, something "inragible" but terribly precious has been lost by what he calls "the rhythm and blues world". This is a book by a radical conservative.

The Death Of Rhythm & Blues takes a roughly chronological form, tracing the rise and fall of R&B culture in all its manifold splendour. At least part of the book's strength is that it gives equal prominence in the narrative to behind-the-scenes characters like original "personality" DJ Jack Gibson and legendary septuagenarian promo man Dave Clark. This is far from being just another "giants of blues and soul" roundup. The focus is really on the role of these people in the black community, on the extent to which black success actually served black America as a whole. When Berry Gordy, the ultimate "acceptable face of black capitalism", switched his Motown acts from the black Queen Booking agency to the huge white William Morris company, was he making it easier for other blacks to follow or was he, in the long term, letting them down?

Black pride and self-determination of course reached their peak in the late 60s, when King James Brown and Queen Aretha ruled and every brother and sister on the block sported an Afro. (Brown may be going to jail now but he was almost the Booker T. Washington of his day.) The ghettos rioted, the Panthers stalked, and soul turned into funk. Yet when the smoke had cleared, what practical power had been gained? Why did the political dynamism of both the National Association of Television and Radio Announcers and the Black Music Association peter out so feebly? For there's no doubt that in the 70s, assimila-

tion triumphed and all but killed George's R&B world. Philadelphia International signed a distribution deal with corporate Columbia, the majors discovered the black market, and hey presto! disco arrived. Suddenly, on "urban contemporary" radio (sic), black music was "too black".

Redemption has come in the apocalyptic, drug-addled 80s, but it's a problematic redemption. If Michael Jackson and Prince exemplify both black autonomy and brilliant awareness of their R&B heritage, are they not also the most glaringly obvious symbols of pop assimilation? If *Black is Beautiful*, why does Michael Jackson apparently want to be white?

Only rap (the dominant R&B music of the 80s) and the "retronuevo" balladry of Anita Baker suggest that the R&B world has a real chance of survival beyond the old chitlin circuit. Meanwhile the spectre of Crossover continues daily to threaten its life.

BARNEY HOSKYNs

A LEFT HAND LIKE GOD

by Peter Silvester
(Quartet, £18.50)

THE FOREST of Afro-American music is dominated by the two sturdy trunks of blues and jazz, with many of their branches tightly interwoven. The idea of repetitive bass-figures, however, is sufficiently fundamental as to be part of a common root-system which is essentially rhythmic. So the assertion that blues piano styles are "a direct copy of the guitar player's technique" gets this lengthy book off to a rather superficial start.

Attempts to separate "pure" boogie-woogie from blues or jazz piano (or gospel or ragtime, for that matter) are doomed to failure, as the author happily proves with a wide-ranging study taking in the great Jimmy Blythe and Arizona Dranes and speculating about Jelly Roll Morton's influence on Jimmy Yancey. Comprehensive coverage is less evident for the R&B period (nothing about Amos Milburn or Sugar Chile Robinson, still less Little Richard), whereas the commercialisation of boogie by swing-era groups claims more than enough space — except for the recently-departed Eddie Heywood, that is. The broad picture of boogie entering the popular main-



Jimmy Yancey (left) listens to Charles Spand, Chicago, 1940s. (Dorcas Schmidt collection.)
From *A Left Hand Like God*.

stream, however, is missing.

The main focus is on the early pioneers and on the brilliant invention of technical wizards such as Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson. Much of the comment is more than a little bland, and the few points of musical detail make one wish for more (the transcription of 47 left-hand patterns is wasted, with so little reference made to them in the text). Unfortunately, Silvester ties himself repeatedly in knots by trying to view recorded examples of boogie as fixed compositions, when the evidence of alternate takes and even of his own comparisons shows how interchangeable the various elements were.

Finally, the relationship between the contributions of Silvester and his late collaborator

Denis Harbinson is far from satisfactory. Some players get treated twice to no good purpose, while Silvester's count of the versions of "Honky Tonk Train" is corrected by Harbinson. And it's a pity he seems unaware that Jess Pickett's "The Dream" was also recorded by Eubie Blake (and by Ry Cooder). Minor errors and confusing chronology, though, are less disturbing than the lurches from lofty academicism to acres of reported speech summarised from old interviews/articles.

Still, as a reference book rather than a continuous read, this is going to remain the authoritative work for some time. As such, it could have benefited from a much fuller bibliography.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

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do you know what it means to miss bethnal green?

As Derek Bailey's latest series of improvised duos gets under way in

London's East End, recording engineer Michael Gerzon looks back at

the guitarist's legendary Bethnal Green Music Library concerts,

which set new standards for

the performance of free music.



A FEW TIMES in every lifetime in any area of music, one comes across a classic series of gigs or concerts, never to be repeated. During a short stay in New York in 1984, I was disappointed to find that the legendary live gigs of the late 70s and early 80s, with the likes of Lydia Lunch, Mats, John Zorn, Bill Laswell and Fred Frith had all but been killed off by the commercial pressure of high rents on venues. For the first time, I realised that London, despite its tiny audiences and media apathy, was in comparison a goldmine of great gigs in improvised music. And when I got back to London, I caught the first of the legendary Bethnal Green Music Library concerts.

From November 1984 to March 1986, the decrepit cheap-contemporary surroundings of the Bethnal Green Music Library housed a series of improvised music concerts organised and funded by Derek Bailey. These showcased many of the greatest improvisers in many styles, including Keith Tippett, Han Bennink, Steve Beresford, Ernst Reijseger, Lindsay Cooper, Tony Coe, Evan Parker, Lol Coxhill, Barry Guy, Phil Wachsmann, Keith Rowe, Eddie Prevost, Phillip Eastop, and the first-ever performances of what has already become a classic duo, Steve Noble and Derek Bailey.

Parts of two of these concerts have been issued on record: that of 27 July 1985 with Evan Parker and Derek Bailey on *Compatibles* (Incus LP) and that of 15 March 1986 with Derek Bailey and Han Bennink on *Hau* (Incus CD), that being the last of the series. Many of the other concerts can be heard on tape at

the National Sound Archive in London, and there is a possibility that a few of these might eventually appear on record.

THE MUSIC Library in Bethnal Green had (sadly, it is no longer there) a wonderfully intimate small chamber-music room attached, one whose atmosphere and audience rapport encouraged great performances. Because of administrative problems in the local council, the room was available only during library opening hours, hence the timing of the gigs on Saturday afternoons. In Indian classical music, each piece of music is considered to belong to a particular time of day or night, and so it proved also at Bethnal Green. The feeling of music that emerged could never have happened in conventional evening gigs in more commercial surroundings – an intimate, concentrated, but totally relaxed seriousness that seemed to bring out new heights even from already great artists.

Most of the concerts involved Derek Bailey with one or two other artists, and the format was generally a series of solos or duos, followed by a group performance by everyone. In many ways, the Bethnal Green concerts were a natural extension of Bailey's work with Company, bringing together a range of artists, established and new. They differed from Company, however, in being much less formal and in changing performers every time.

As is the custom in London in this music, some of the finest gigs had tiny audiences – only four people (*I was there* – Ed) in the

case of a wonderful Bailey/Wachsmann performance on the afternoon of Live Aid, or the Bailey/Parker performance, part of which is issued on *Compatibles*. However, some of the classic performances (Bailey/Tippett, Bailey/Bennink and Bailey/Coxhill) attracted relatively good audiences due to the reputation of the performers.

Gigs in small intimate surroundings really are the best way to hear improvised music, although it is a quirk of audience psychology that usually it is the less satisfactory prestige festival or theatre gigs that attract a proportionately larger audience – as though people don't feel safe if not in a large crowd. In a small venue like Bethnal Green, it is much easier to establish a personal relationship with the performers, and every week one would see members of the audience chatting with Bailey or his guest performers over coffee in the interval or after the gig. At times one had the feeling of having been invited to a private performance just for a few friends, rather than the mass anonymity of most gigs.

Incidents that come to mind include the *drum beat* journalist interviewing Evan Parker before one gig, asking what was his longest continuous period of playing using circular breathing without pausing for breath (answer: 45 minutes, and then the concert promoter asked him to stop). Then there was the record number of drumsticks (about 25) broken by Bennink at his gig (one friend of mine got a good supply of firewood out of that), and his busting of the drum footpedal he had borrowed from Steve Noble. One member of the audience during that gig admitted to being genuinely frightened by the physical violence of Bennink's playing – a mere digital recording on the *Han* compact disc cannot fully capture the terror of being there live.

Then there was classical clarinetist Anthony Pay free-improvising on a replica Mozart clarinet (whatever the purists for period authenticity in instruments may think); Steve Beresford, between bouts on tuba and piano, commenting on the dubious delights of the greasy-spoon café opposite and the sheer convenience of having the municipal laundrette attached to the Music Library (you can hear this on the tape in the National Sound Archive!); and Will Evans, who has sometimes acquired a bit of a reputation for thud-and-blunder drumming, coming up and apologising to me for possible difficulties I might have had in recording him because much of his playing was so quiet as to be nearly inaudible.

The great constant in these concerts was Derek Bailey. Those who attended most weeks (and there was a small faithful band of men and women who did so) had the unique opportunity of hearing how the playing of a great musician changed and developed. No one hearing just the occasional concert, record or broadcast of an artist like Bailey can fully appreciate his playing. These only capture snapshots of isolated moments of time. Hearing his performances unfold week after week made me aware that his style is continuously developing, and one could hear the process of change as itself an important part of his artistic and musical statement. Presumably this is also true of many other great musicians, but how many of us ever have, or take, the opportunity to hear this process unfold by going to a series of

concerts over a short period of time?

Bailey is often accused of having an inflexible and relatively fixed style of guitar playing, yet the intensive experience of listening to the Bethnal Green concerts (as well as numerous other London concerts by Bailey over the same period) revealed absolutely the opposite. The outlines of his style may well be largely fixed, but within these he has more impetus for creative change and development than almost any other player I have heard – exactly what makes him recognised as a major figure. The relaxed quality of the Bethnal Green concerts also reflected another aspect of Bailey's attitudes – he does not judge performances on the basis of "how good" they are (which implies some arbitrary standard of judgement), but simply on the basis of whether he enjoyed playing them.

THE RELAXED quality of the gigs undoubtedly helped performers give of their very best, and this was particularly obvious in the gig with Lol Coxhill. Although, knowing the extrovert public persona of Coxhill, many might find this difficult to believe, he is in fact easily embarrassed in public, and his banter is a means he uses to cover up this embarrassment. It is significant that, at Bethnal Green, he seemed totally relaxed and did a gig without any of the usual droll asides in the middle. Instead, he produced the purest music-making I have ever heard from him, with Bailey's first guitar solo being taken up and continued without a pause in his saxophone solo, the two solos being turned into a single seamless piece of music. This was followed by a duo in the second half that had the conversation-of-equals quality of the finest chamber music, without any of the egocentricity that mars much British improvised music.

Equally memorable was the gig in which percussionist Steve Noble first played with Bailey. Not only did this gig include Noble's first-ever public solo performance, but it started the lasting duo collaboration of Noble with Bailey. And a remarkable duo it was. Steve Noble's influences from established improvising drummers have often been noted, notably that from Han Bennink, but this performance revealed qualities unique to Noble. He is the only percussionist I have heard who is not only able to complement Bailey's rhythmic intricacy, but who also was able to use pitched sounds to underline Bailey's unique harmonic sense. And, as is so often the case, Bailey was able to draw out of another performer new possibilities that they might have been unaware of in themselves.

In the case of more established great improvisers, such as Keith Tippett or Phil Wachsmann, it was less a case that they produced something different from the usual, rather that their normal qualities were heightened and intensified. Pianist Tippett rarely produces performances that are less than very good, tinged with magic and mystery, but only rarely does he reach the sheer beauty of his Bethnal Green performance (and, as he wryly notes, it is very unusual for such sublime performances to be captured on tape). Phil Wachsmann's violin and electronic effects processing is very rooted in the classical tradition, and thus often antagonises those who think that improvised music should be (in a memorable phrase of Derek Bailey) "eccentric

jazz". Yet Wachsmann is one of Britain's most original and creative improvisers, and the cool beauty of his basic style is subject to a profound and almost chaotic disturbance from his use of delayed effects. With Wachsmann, the classical side of Bailey's playing finds its element, as in the classic performance of 13 July 1985 (the day of Live Aid).

Special demand must also be made of classical French horn player Phillip Eastop, a virtuoso who plays in the London Sinfonietta. Originally chosen by Bailey for one of his Company weeks, Eastop's naïveté and inexperience in improvising proved a positive asset in his Bethnal Green performances, since it liberated him from the clichés that have often stifled this music. Eastop has the musical instincts of a born improviser, and used techniques from contemporary classical music to brilliant effect. In particular, unlike most jazz or rock-based improvisers, he often realised the value of playing very few notes with lots of space between them (classical players often have long intervals of not playing in scores). Again, Bethnal Green provided the first outing of another group, BBEN, consisting of Bailey, saxophonist Mick Beck from Bailey's home town of Sheffield, Eastop and Noble.

SADLY, TOWARDS the end of 1985, the Music Library performances started running out of steam, and it became evident to Bailey that it was time to bring them to an end, only to revive them for a couple of performances in March 1986 involving visiting Dutch improvisers Reijseger and Bennink.

Nevertheless, even towards the end of 1985, there were memorable gigs, notably that with cellist extraordinaire Tristan Honsinger.

In a way, the Bethnal Green concerts were a lucky accident of their time. That year, Bailey had unusually little work abroad (he now performs much more rarely in London), the perfect small venue of the Music Library was only available at an unusual time of day for gigs, and the improvised-music scene had not yet become infected with image-oriented "jazz" fashions. These concerts were very much an act of faith by Bailey, who put his own money up to put them on — these were not "prestige" gigs funded by arts sponsorship money. Despite small audiences, they produced far more purely musical satisfaction than many a major festival, and a fair number of those performances were taped for posterity to enjoy.

Certainly, the Bethnal Green concerts were one of the highlights of my life listening to music, and I can only say that, if at any time one comes across an exceptionally fine series of gigs (in any area of music), don't assume that they will always be there and neglect to go to most of them. Rather, make that effort. It will reward you endlessly, and prevent you from becoming one of the many who try to recapture a golden era of their music that they missed by going to the gigs of fading musicians whose time is now gone.

February concerts in Derek Bailey's new series of improvised duos at London's Oasis Club are listed in Club Dates.

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STEVE WILLIAMSON, as triple with VIVA LA BLACK. Photo by ANDREW POTHECARY



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**TYNER/SANDERS/MURRAY/McBEE/
HAYNES**
BLUES FOR COLTRANE
(Impulse/MCA 255 392-2)

Recorded New York, 9 July 1987.

Blasin' For John C.; Nauma, The Precious, Lazy Bird; I Want To Talk About You, Last Of The Hipness, Trane. (Last track CD only.)

Pharoah Sanders and/or David Murray (sax), McCoy Tyner (p), Cecil McBee (b), Roy Haynes (d)

THIS ONE is so good it's difficult to know how or where to start. With the drummer, maybe? Much of the last decade Roy Haynes, one of the very greats, has been hiding his light under a bushel, drumming for chamber-jazz groups (Gary Burton's quatter, Corea's trio, Michel Petrucci's trio). Even Alice Coltrane's group was too introspective a proposition to let Haynes unload ideas that must have been fermenting in his mind since his contribution to the landmark *Selflessness* (1963). But here... here Haynes testily finds his context, and a nice worth the stoking.

From the opening moments of "Bluesin' For John C", a thrown-together McCoy sketch of a tune (more's not necessary, the classic quartet could make a *scale* a cathedral of sound) this much, at least, is apparent: Haynes is Tyner's drummer. Or McCoy his pianist. All those "Supertrios" exercises seem almost redundant. Haynes is *fun-tastic* here, his kick-drum shuddering against McCoy's propulsive left-hand jabs, his tom-toms resonantly thrilling, joyously *physical*. If Haynes and Tyner don't do more together after this, it'll be a crime. No other drummer has ever got as close to the heart of McCoy's art as Roy does on this record. In a word: wow.

Well, let's begin again. This is a tribute record, and of course, there have been dozens of Coltrane tributes in the last few years and, doubtless, dozens more are to come.

Blues For Coltrane, though, is something else, its intensity of an obsessive nature, almost science-like. Pharoah Sanders says, "It felt like he was there," and this is not idle pseudo-mysticism. When Pharoah and Murray hit the theme of "Trane", delivered over a see-sawing vamp reminiscent of "India", it's impossible to think anything else. They open the piece up and we move into the scary talking-in-tongues territory of "The Father, The Son And The

Holy Ghost"

Yet in some ways (irreverent as it'll sound), this new song is *better*. Go back 22 years and listen to McCoy as the music begins to fragment and you can hear his uncertainty. Now he knows, with absolute clarity, what to do with this music. The apprenticeship is over. Ditto for Pharoah, a consummate melody player. Compare the "Nauma" here with the version on *Village Vanguard Again*. His authority is so assured, he doesn't need to scream. When he does — look out. There's no wastage here. The players take the fastest route to the crux that Coltrane spoke of.

In the liner notes, Murray mutters something about never having been a Coltrane man. Nevertheless, he's sucked straight into the modal jet stream and plays as if born there. His own tunes adapt easily to the concept and his



shattering angular solo, jumping steps through the octaves, on "Last Of The Hipness" is his best feature on record since '79's "Morning Song".

Everybody here, in fact, plays beyond his habitual peak. McBee, schooled in post-Coltrane-ism through his stunts with Pharoah and Alice C, has the rhythm by the throat and won't let go. What he and Haynes and McCoy pull off on "Lazy Bird" is the sheer living apex of piano-trio music. It's hard to imagine anything more exciting.

The rigorous objectivist perhaps will deduct a few points for lack of "innovation" but, Jesus, how many times do these men have to reinvent jazz? All right — this is "in the tradition". Good. But what a glorious, life-affirming tradition it is.

STEVE LAKE

ANTHONY BRAXTON
QUARTET (LONDON) 1985
(Leo LR 414/5/6)

Recorded London, 13 November 1985.

Composition 122 (+ 108A), Composition 40(10), Calligraphy Form Structure, Composition 52; Composition 86 (+ 12 + 96), Piano Solo From Composition 30, Composition 113; Composition 105A, Percussion Solo From Composition 96, Composition 30F, Composition 121, Composition 116.

Anthony Braxton (cl, f, saxes), Marilyn Crispell (p), Mark Dresser (b), Gerry Hemingway (perc).

I GUESS this one's kosher (it's got notes by Graham Lock). There are three well-produced records in a box containing the whole of Braxton's Bloomsbury Theatre concert from the 1985 tour, clearly recorded and organised so that the breaks in continuity occur at the least inconvenient spot (always a difficulty with recorded evidence of Braxton's live events since "compositions" flow together, the only definitive break in the music coming when the band leaves the stage). Thus there's anything up to ten minutes' difference in the playing-times of the sides. The overall length is around two hours, and the second set is rather longer than the first, so three discs are necessary and it's nice to have that feeling that care really has been taken.

Was it worth it? The answer's got to be yes. Braxton's music doesn't always jump out and grab you by the throat — maybe that's one of the reasons he doesn't often make headlines, doesn't get the media cover that other (often lesser) artists do — it's a recurrent problem of jazz and you need only a little reticence to be trapped in it, but that doesn't mean his music has no power. And, yes, it's not always totally easy. Braxton makes you work sometimes for what you gain, but on the other hand if you listen and let the music draw you into its logic it begins to be relatively self-explanatory and quite dramatic.

There's no shortage of reference; that's maybe to be expected in music which — yes — has a scholarly dimension: in fact they exist in depth. Post-Ornette, post-modern, none the less sax'n rhythm also. More than that, there's the *feel* — not at any time the *sound*, just the feel (and feel's not the right word anyway in this context) — of Lennie Tristano about it too. And with it arrive some of the contradictions of "free" improvising, that it's better done and stretches its practitioners more when some

quite deliberate, if subtle, restraints are imposed upon it.

These restraints, of course, are imposed by Braxton's compositions, which take less the form of written "lines" in the old sense than of rather elaborately explained "procedures". In this they refer to other modern/"straight" composers, but there's an odd unifying dimension insofar as these techniques are related both to the intellectual control of discussion of the music (moving on Braxton's terms, hence entering the realm of discursive structures and semiotics) yet equally, in the sometimes rather too easy universalism that this falls into, they recall something of that bebop gypsy from an earlier generation, Sun Ra. Ra was from Chicago too (well, some of us subscribe to that) so maybe it's something about the Middle West.

Yet to set up such a schematisation of reference, however wide-ranging and attractive, in another sense tends to detract from other things inherent in the music, because reference turns the mind to another path, away from the intrinsic shape and value of the music overall and the intimate minutiae of its detail. Trying to work all that out merely adds to its fascination, however. I'd be prepared to bet that when you hear it you'll come up with a different set of reactions to these. Probably, as I live with it, mine will alter too, and if you call around in about 20 years (it'll wear for that length of time at least) I'll have a more considered verdict available – well maybe. But for now, it seems as close to "state of the art" as we presently have, and that ain't bad.

JACK COOKE

ANTHONY BRAXTON/ROVA SAXOPHONE QUARTET

THE AGGREGATE

(sound aspects SAS 023)

Recorded, San Francisco, 22 August 1986, and Oakland, 30 July 1988

The Shopper, The Aggregate, Composition 129 (excerpt) 1, 2 & 3

Bruce Ackley (ss, cl), Anthony Braxton (sso, ss, as, ts, bs, bar, C-flt, tr), Larry Ochs (sso, as, ts, tr), Jon Raskin (ss, bs, cl), Andrew Vogel (sso, as, ts, fl).

ENOUGH YEARS have passed since the birth of SOS (the first of the great sax-only combos), enough spit has been shot through the crook for the novelty tag to have been ripped clean away. But then Rova was never really a novelty. Uncapping their mouthpieces for the first time in 1977, they did not actually corner a

pre-existing avant-garde, they created their own space and definition.

These were predecessors of sorts: the aforementioned SOS, Anthony Braxton's *Composition 37* for saxophone ensemble; contemporaries in *The World Saxophone Quartet*; solo voices too in Serve Lacy and Lol Coxhill, whose work negotiated rhythm within the confines of isolation – but in the majority of cases, pursuing a music for unaccompanied saxophone(s) was only one line of enquiry among many. Rova, however, made it an exclusive – all other projects went to the wall.

Call it austere, but their approach has paid off handsomely – just listen to them. When they hit hard, there is no one to match their totality of total control (tense, brittle sounding) or their rhythmic discipline – the very grit and substance of their music. Solos move fast,



cutting in and out of the collective cut and thrust, each individual flight fashioning and feeding the development of the ensemble voice. But let's not ignore the drawback: previously staged collaborations with outsiders have been problematic (at worst, you can sense the four closing ranks like blood cells attacking a virus).

With Braxton there are no such problems: Rova acknowledge his steering influence on their work, but all the same, the degree of harmony between them is surprising. On all three of these live cuts, Braxton melds with the ensemble completely – they speak as one. The title cut penned by Jon Raskin is the most immediate – a series of modular sketches which assume a thematic continuity, set around a robust, twice-stated hard-swinging motif. Braxton's own "Composition 129" is

more difficult to grapple with, more structurally complex and tortuous: in performance, a rich empathetic exchange calls up a variety of combinations within the ensemble as well as the ensemble itself. Only "The Shopper" disappoints with a rhythmically sluggish middle section.

How little the album differs from previous Rova releases is itself a testament to their success in utilising commissioned writing (they have since undertaken another project, this time with Fred Frith) as a means of opening up to influences other than their own dictates. Like their classic *Ai Wai* (Metalanguage – now deleted), *The Aggregate* takes no prisoners.

DAVID ILLIC

MILES DAVIS

MILES DAVIS ALL STARS

(Jazz Band EB409)

Recorded New York, 5 January 1959.

Walkin', All Of Me

Miles Davis (tr), Cannonball Adderley (ss), John Coltrane (ts), Red Garland (tr), Paul Chambers (b), Philly Joe Jones (d)

Recorded Washington, February 1959.

Sid's Ahead, Bye Bye Blackbird, Straight No Chaser.

Personnel as above

THIS SEEMS to be the first appearance of these sessions, listed in Priestley's discography but not traceable to a previous release. Made as they were a few weeks before the sessions for *Kind Of Blue*, the music finds the group at a performing peak. Adderley's presence is more a distraction than anything, though Miles liked him enough to reputedly offer a king's ransom when the altoist wanted to move on. Adderley tackles everything as if it were a mid-tempo blues, which isn't exactly wrong, just a little too straightforward. Davis and Coltrane are working in other orbits altogether, while Garland and the others tough it out with almost immaculate finesse.

The contrasts that Miles and Trane work into the two programmes create some spell-binding moments. On his blistering improvisation on "Walkin'" the tenorman is in his greatest sheets-of-sound guise, unpeeling the chords with fabulous energy; but in "Sid's Ahead" he might be a different man, piecing together his solo from odds and ends. "Blackbird" and "All Of Me" are like spinning spools, notes flying everywhere. The style is a bridge

between his earlier restlessness and the more earnest, cliff-browed manner of a year or two later.

Davis is a commanding presence. There seem to be hesitations in some of his solos — "Walkin'" is tense with speared high notes and sharp quick phrases — but his playing is taut with ideas, as if he has almost too much to say. "All Of Me" and the very fast "Straight No Chaser" (unfortunately foreshortened) bristle with the trumpeter's impetus. More superb music from a great moment in jazz history.

MIKE FISH

DAVID MURRAY TRIO

THE HILL

(Black Saint 120 110-1)

Recorded: New York City, 29 November 1986
Santa Barbara And Cousin Folks, The Hill, Fling, Take The Calumet, Herbie Miller, Chorus Bridge
 David Murray (ts, bcl), Richard Davis (b), Joe Chambers (d, vb).

STRAIGHT ON your shelf next to Joe Henderson's *State Of The Tenor* should go *The Hill*. Like Henderson, Murray is joined by two of the finest rhythm players in the business and Richard Davis, especially, shines throughout the record.

The broad programme of music shows off the enormous versatility of the leader, who may have mellowed slightly but whose melodic gifts are becoming richer all the time. Honking intervals and sacral tone, with a Hawkins-like two-beat see-sawing, kick off the action in "Follies". In his solo, Davis is chromatically sliding up and down the banisters of a spiral staircase on bowed chords. Come to think of it, all his solos on the record are bowed, and his mastery here brings an urgent sense of altitude and flight to the proceedings.

The title track retains its atmosphere of mystery and brooding from Octet recordings, and the performance here is less grand, but more restrained and concentrated. Chambers produces a lovely resonant sound from his drums, underpinning what is essentially a duet, with quiet insistence. "Fling" is a rather lush, Latin number which is saved from over-pomp by Davis' superb rhythmic imagination. The tenor recalls Don Byas, with dignified control in a fine solo.

"Take The Calumet" reveals something of the clash, the collision. David Murray's playing is always honest, passionate and natural.

He doesn't play licks, but always works out his thematic material to its own spontaneous conclusions. The implications of this are that his improvisation sometimes reaches a fascinating crisis of ideas when playing within the context of a straight-ahead tune. Having said that, it's an aspect of his music that is highly enjoyable for the tension that it stimulates. Chambers and Davis tend to tie themselves down to the tune during the tenor's wilder flights, always providing him with a comfortable place to land (although sometimes we wish they too would desert their posts).

"Herbie Miller" is arguably the highlight. A duet between bass and bass clarinet in which, as one, they plunge from high desolate plains down to cavernous conspiracies. Murray's remarkable tonal plasticity is matched fully by Davis' intuition, and there are a couple of

MILES DAVIS ALL STARS

Including JERRY COLTRANE
 with CHARMALL HOGUELEY



buzzing, humming moments when it's hard to tell who's playing what.

The complete history of the tenor saxophone is brought in and out of focus in the dramatic landscape of David Murray's playing. But his ability to avoid direct quotation from the masters, and at the same time assimilate their lessons into his own approach is what makes him a powerful preacher.

ROLAND RAMANAN

PAUL BLEY, PAUL MOTIAN

NOTES

(Soul Note 121 190-1)

Recorded: Milan, 3 & 4 July 1987.
Notes: Batteries; Piano Solo No 1, What 107th Street; Just Us, No 3, Tense, Ballad, Excerpt, Love Hurts, Inside, Finale, Duets
 Paul Bley (p), Paul Motian (perc).

PAUL BLEY

SOLO PIANO

(Scepter/Chase SCS-1236)

Recorded: Copenhagen, 2 April 1988
Ten To Ten, Marlene, Lady Of Cher, Peace Pipe, Blues Reconstructive, Slipping, Get Baby Am I I Good To You, And Now The Queen, You Go To My Head, Carla; Chopin-Clapham, Finale
 Paul Bley (p).

IT'S NEARLY 30 years since Cecil Taylor told Sunny Murray to forget about the bar-lines and so freed drummers from their traditional role of policing the beat. Since then, for various reasons, few drummers have taken full advantage of that freedom, preferring the relative security of the accompanist's role, with the result that good duo LPs featuring percussionists have been a rarity.

Paul Bley's previous foray into the genre — the *Sonor* LP with George Cross McDonald — was hardly a conspicuous success, but his new *Notes* with Paul Motian is the best piano/drums LP I've heard since the excellent Marilyn Crispell/Doug James And Your Ivory Vase Sings collaboration of 1985. That album's volatile, airy lyricism affords a very different pleasure from the cunningly-wrought miniatures etched here by Bley and Motian; where Crispell and James were like two voices twined in exhilarating song, Bley and Motian recall rather two codgers humming quietly to themselves. Still, once you've adjusted to their relatively low-key approach, there's a wealth of intuitive intricacy to enjoy.

Notes comprises one solo track per player, plus 11 brief, almost entirely spontaneously improvised duos on which pianist and percussionist complement each other beautifully via some disciplined and attentive independence. Motian is not simply a great drummer; in particular, he's an impeccable player of cymbals, able to deploy a spectrum of micro-tonal shadings, from icy splinters to a delicate mesh of whispers. Bley too reaffirms his mastery of understatement and displays again his gift for plucking the most melodic of lines as if from thin air: "Piano Solo No 1", "Ballad" and the poignant "Love Hurts" (no relation to the Everly Brothers) are the finest examples here.

Bley's own *Solo Piano* is also required listening: a worthy successor to his other 80s solo LPs, like the brilliant — if implacably bleak — *Tenors* and somewhat painterly *Tango Palace*. *Solo Piano* carries an underlying — and characteristic — hint of *gravitas*, though there's nothing here

that approaches the desolation of *Tears*: if there's a dominant mood at all, it's probably one of thoughtful reflection.

On the sleeve of *Notes* Bley is quoted as saying that he prefers to make records in real time, simply to walk in off the street, sit at the piano, improvise — and "any relating back to a song and so forth is more like, I guess, a courtesy". The courtesy is offered on his solo "You Go To My Head", where Bley wanders dreamily around the original tune yet never states it directly; but unlike many improvisers he's scrupulously respectful of the emotional freight of the music, and even his most abstract improvisations are shaped by a composer's grasp of balance and structure. His touch now is flawless; each note chosen with due care for placement, weight and tone.

Like Taylor, Crispell, Blake, Schluppenbach, Paul Bley is one of the great improvising pianists of the age. These two records are the latest demonstrations.

GRAHAM LOCK

DUKE ELLINGTON

BLACK, BROWN AND BEIGE
(RCA Bluebird 6641-1-RB)

Recorded 1944-46

Work Song, Cabin Swing, The Blues, Three Dances; I Ain't Got Nothing But The Blues, I'm Beginning To See The Light, Don't You Know I Care, I Didn't Know About You, Carnegie Blues, Blue Cellophane, Mood To Be Woud, My Heart Sings, Kissing Boy, Everything But Your Ruff Staccato, Prelude To A Kiss, Caravan, Black And Tan Fantasy, Mood Indigo, In A Sentimental Mood, I Don't Mean A Thing, Sophisticated Lady, Take Me I Shall Sigh, I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart, Solitude, Black Beauty, Every Hour On The Hour, The Perfume Suite, Things Ain't What They Used To Be, Tell Ya What I'm Gonna Do, Come To Baby, Du', I'm Just A Lonely 55-And-So, Long, Strong and Constantine, The Wonder Of You, Rockabye River, Suddenly It's Jangled, Translucency, Just Squeeze Me, A Guttering Le A Charming, You Don't Love Me No More, Pretty Woman, Fly Baby, Back Home Again In Indiana, Blue Is The Night, Loner Blues, Just You, Just Me, Beale Street Blues, My Honey's Love, Armo, Memphis Blues, Ghost Of A Chance, St Louis Blues, Swingin' Fire, Royal Garden Blues, Esquire Swank, Madriff
Tate, Jordan, Sileton Hemphill, Cat Anderson, Ray Nance, Rex Stewart, Francis Williams, Harold Baker (c), Claude Jones, Lawrence Brown, Joe Newman, Wilbur DeParis, Tommy Dorsey (ts), Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope (as); Al Sears, Jimmy Hamilton (s), Ch. Harry Camm (bas, cl, bcl), Dli, Billy Strayhorn (p, art), Fred Guy (g), Junior Raglin, Bob Haggart, Sid Weiss, Al Lucas, Oscar Pettiford (b), Sonny Greer, Sid Catlett (d), Al Hibbler, Jura Sherrill, Ray Nance, Kay Davis, Marge Ellington, Marian Cox (v). (Collective personnel.)

EXACTLY WHAT you feel about this boxed set (four LPs/three CDs) depends on what you hope to find. If it's proof of the continuing creation of single-length swing instrumentals of great invention and innovation, this period of Ellington is as good as most others. Items like "Esquire Swank" and "Suddenly It Jumped" are excellent in isolation, as are the features for one soloist like "Blue Cellophane" (the late Lawrence Brown) or "Mood To Be Woud" (Hodges).

On the other hand, the effects of Ellington's response to the rise of the crooner (in terms of his recording career) predominate to an alarming extent. It's only when you've got past the doleful tones of Al Hibbler and the competent cuteness of the female singers that you listen to what's going on behind and in front of them. Most of these vocals are Duke originals of the



time, including a particularly fine batch in tracks 5-8, and they vary from the high-flown to the funky ("Pretty Woman" on the "Doxy" chord-sequence is both). And "Translucency", including a melody credited to Lawrence Brown and with the wordless soprano of Kay Davis, is a joy.

The album title rightly focuses attention on Duke's longest work, the drastically shortened extracts from which form the first four tracks and were all that was generally known for decades after its premiere. They stand up surprisingly well, full of both 40s funk ("Work Song") and lyricism ("Carmine Sunday"), and are better recorded in some ways than the 1958 extracts. The inclusion here of the shorter "Perfume Suite", the first composition jointly attributed to Duke and Billy Strayhorn, shows some very different facets of Ellingtonian being

developed.

The whole Strayhorn question is raised also by the new settings of old hits (tracks 16-22 and 24-26). Mainly instrumental, this project is complex and fascinating, but full of Stray's refined sugar instead of the Maestro's molasses. The contrast is underlined by the more groovy revivals of two small-group pieces first recorded on the same day of 1941, "Just Squeeze Me" (its theme now counterpointed with the riff which used to be its intro) and, appropriately, "Things Ain't What They Used To Be".

Andrew Homzy's detailed notes discuss these and many other points, and the whole production is exemplary (except for insufficient gaps between tracks). For listeners not heavily into Ellington, however, the previous box (called *The Blanton-Webster Band* on RCA Bluebird 5659-1-RB) has a far heavier proportion of acknowledged masterpieces.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

WAYNE HORVITZ ETC TODOS SANTOS (sound aspects SAS 019)

Recorded New York and Hoboken, January 1988.

Adagio, Nightbirds, Cheyenne, The Road To Zamora, Your Palm On The Window, Drowning, Tootie Sweets, Waltz, Ours, The Road To Zamora/Ashe To Ashe
Horvitz (p, DX7), Burch Morris (cornet), Robert Previte (d, DX7, d mach, mem), Doug Wieselman (s, cl); Bill Friesell (gtr).

ALL THE MUSIC on this album was composed by Horvitz's wife, Robin Holcomb, although it's impossible to tell, on most of the tracks, where composition ends and improvisation begins. This is doubtless as it should be. There are five Horvitz/Morris/Previte trios, three Friesell/Wieselman duets, and one Horvitz/Previte duet.

The trios tend to follow a pattern, starting with rapt, poised, *primitivo* mood-setting (the piano and marimba combination on "Waltz" sounds like early Harold Budd) and then building into work-outs in which Morris's busy corner predominates. The exception is the first reading of "Road To Zamora", which is a chaotic piece of Chanoesque. You can sense the attentiveness of the players to each other's needs, and the sheer ceaseless intelligence keeps you listening, but these aren't the best tracks on the album. There's not enough of Horvitz's piano, for one thing; his right-approach on "Your Palm On The Window" —

hovering on the fringes of tonality and then backing teasingly away — leaves you aching for more.

The real stars of the record, though (to my ears, at least) are Frisell and Wieselman. Their duets are sparse, contrapuntal and almost metronomic: it's amazing how much mileage they can get, on "Cheyenne", out of one simple three-note phrase. Textually, too, they're an appealing team. Frisell's penchant for echo and delay somehow sharpens rather than blurs the edge of his statements, and he blends sumptuously with Wieselman's clarinet on the final track, "Ashes To Ashes", which is also one of the most accessible melodically.

If this is the current state of the avant-garde, there's precious little here to scare anybody off. Whether you call him a post-modernist or simply an eclectic, Horvitz (who bears, going by the only photograph I've seen, an alarming resemblance to Bernard Levin) is in any case not quite such a restless genre-hopper as his colleague John Zorn. When you think about it, though, there's an astounding variety of ideas on this record. Play it loud, or you'll miss half of them.

JONATHAN COE

ARTHUR BLYTHE BASIC BLYTHE (CBS4606771)

Recorded: New York, 1988

Autumn In New York (Part One), *Lenox Avenue Breakdown*, *Heart To Heart*, *As Of Yet*, *Ruby My Dear*, *Faceless Woman*, *Autumn In New York* (Part Two).

Arthur Blythe (as), John Hicks (tp), Anthony Cox (b), Bobby Bazzie (d), David Naden, Jan Mullen (vn), Theodore Israel (vib); Richard Locker (cl), Sanford Allen, Paul Peabody (wb), Jesse Levine (slo), Fred Zlotkin (clo)

WHEN ARTHUR Blythe signed with CBS in 1978 there was genuine optimism that jazz had turned the corner from the dark days of the 70s fusion mercenaries. But sadly Blythe's career with CBS has never quite got in gear. Blythe himself claims to have regained artistic control over his output, and if this is so he has made a series of misculations. His collaborations with Bob Stewart on tuba on albums for India Navigation and Adelphi were expanded into what became known as his "guitar band", which was featured at the expense of his standard quartet, called "In The Tradition".

What Blythe could not have known was that jazz during the 80s would be increasingly

dominated by the style of jazz he left on the back burner. When CBS signed Wynnon Marsalis in 1981, the breakthrough Blythe hoped for became the province of the brilliant young trumpeter, who has assiduously remained within the jazz "tradition". Other than *Basic Blythe*, Blythe's remaining eight albums for CBS have only one devoted to the "In The Tradition" format, and that is badly recorded. It also has Stanley Cowell on piano, when Blythe has long enjoyed a special relationship with John Hicks, whose inspirational playing reaches parts of Blythe's psyche other pianists don't — witness "Miss Nancy" on *Illusions* (CBS).

Thus *Basic Blythe* emerges as an exercise in bolting the stable door, but is slightly obscured by the fact that Blythe has integrated a string section into the proceedings. Like Max



basic blythe

Arthur Blythe (as),
John Hicks (tp),
Anthony Cox (b),
Bobby Bazzie (d),
David Naden,
Jan Mullen (vn),
Theodore Israel (vib);
Richard Locker (cl),
Sanford Allen,
Paul Peabody (wb),
Jesse Levine (slo),
Fred Zlotkin (clo)

Roach's experiments in similar vein over the last few years, it is, in the words of the one-liner from Rowan and Martin's show, "very interesting, but stupid." Nevertheless, there are sufficient moments here when Blythe and Hicks head for the open spaces that make you wonder what might have been, not only with this album in particular, but with his recording career in general, had Blythe developed the quartet concept on record. Blythe is a superb ballad interpreter and on "Ruby My Dear" his causticating yet poignant tone cuts directly to the heart of a song. He has long had a liking for Monk's compositions (hear his 1983 album *Light Blue*) and here he creates a solo of unrelenting intensity.

The strings successfully integrate on Blythe's reworking of his 1979 "Lenox Avenue Breakdown" and add to his slashing lines

on "Faceless Woman" and "Autumn In New York (Part Two)". It's on these tracks that the alchemy between saxophonist and pianist work best too. Blythe has the ability to project himself beyond his ensemble when the mood takes him, dominating the proceedings in the way all great improvisers in jazz — from Armstrong to Rollins — seem able to do. But the remaining three tracks — fortunately short — are rather gummed-up by strings to produce yet another imperfect Blythe album.

STUART NIKERSON

LOUIS MOHLO VIVA LA BLACK (Ogun OG 553)

Recorded: London, January 1988.

Tristan's Law, *Joyful Noise*, *Mongezi's Prayer*, *Part One*, *Last Opportunity*, *Mad High*, *Wozza*. Mohlo (d, voc), Sean Bergin (ts, as), Claude Deppa (tr, vib); Thebe Lepere (perc), Steve Williamson (es, ss), Roberto Bellarila (b).

THE CONTINGENT of South African musicians who came to London in the late 1960s created an impact that, as Glenn Ujpe Masokoane observes in the liner notes to this disc, can't be left out of any appraisal of the way British free music developed. Township music brought new melodic ideas and highly communicative rhythms to forms of jazz otherwise impelled by Ornette, Coltrane and the American avantists, and the vibrations of that meeting still buzz.

Louis Mohlo, a drummer of direct, unfussy methods whose snare accents are as conclusive as a slammed door and whose cymbal beat is a cauldron of rhythm, powered not only the Chris McGregor group of the time but a variety of other bands featuring prominent local players — like Brotherhood of Breath and the great Mike Osborne trio. Of the original expeditionary force, Mohlo is the only physical presence on this session, but Chris McGregor and two late-lamented artists, Harry Miller and Mongezi Feza, all contributed themes to it — and young British blacks Steve Williamson and Claude Deppa are strongly featured here.

If's an uneven record — side two is incomparably more rich and relaxed than side one — and it suffers in its early stages from 60s free-jazz mannerisms like endless prolonged tenor squeals followed by window-rattling bell-note hooks, or trumpets that sound like someone trying to ascend to a pitch always just out of reach. The style that used to be called "high-

energy" playing more often than not failed to reach the trance-like state at which dynamics wouldn't matter any more, and sounded instead simply bemused that there was nowhere else to go to if climax had been your starting point.

But if this infects the soloing on the early tracks, the themes are striking – an unexpected cross between Mingus and an Ayler dirge on Tristan Honsinger's piece, a jaunty township song in McGregor's "Joyful Noises", a frantic, boiling uptempo outing on a fragmented, blurred tune on Keith Tippett's "Mongers-Frames". The most powerful and considered improvisation comes with Harry Miller's stately "Lost Opportunities" – though Deppa sounds ill at ease, Sean Bergin's throaty, guttural tenor swarms over the accompaniment, and Steve Williamson's fluid soprano saxophone takes the piece from rumination to exposition via Moholo's gentle acceleration to a slinky four-four.

"Woz" is the most emphatically African of the selection, the horns beginning to circle and embrace over the chanted backdrop in a way that must have made Moholo wish it was the beginning of the session rather than the end. The drummer's playing from the first sound to the last is inspirational, and inspired.

JOHN FOREHAM

SERGEY KURYOKHIN POP MECHANICS NO 17 (Leo LR 158)

Recorded: Novosibirsk, 2 October 1984

Pop Mechanics No 17 Parts 1 & 2

Kuryokhin (p, org, ss, v), Igor Burman (as, ts, bs, d); Sergey Panaienko (tba, b); Sergey Belichenko (d, clo, bv), Valentina Ponomareva (v)

In the recently repeated BBC documentary series *Comrades*, the Russian pianist Sergey Kuryokhin was filmed in a Leningrad performance space using a motley gathering of pseudopunks, animated free jazzers, classical string players and a hopelessly inept tuxedoed vocalist through one of his more diffuse and cacophonous compositions. This and the pianist's accompanying commentary went some way towards revealing the extent of his unusual ideas about the process of making music. What was also immediately apparent in the ensuing interview clips was the size of his ego, only partly obscured by a woeful, neo-beep lifestyle and his drop-dead responses to the interviewer's line of questioning.

In US jazz circles Kuryokhin was famous for a minute or two for rubbishing the music of the AACM school as worthless and reactionary, citing the approaches of Derek Bailey and Evan Parker as examples of the true way forward. At a time when the likes of David Murray and John Carter were releasing records at regular intervals to almost unanimous acclaim it was an amusing interjection. Strange then to listen to this live recording from 1984 and find it has more in common with the current New York avant garde than any recognisably European style of performance.

On this evidence Kuryokhin might be – how can I put this? – the John Zorn of Russian jazz. Not because he writes fulsome tributes to Italian film composers or falls in love with obscure Japanese B-movie stars, but he shares Zorn's sense of plunder and his desire to



juxtapose the frivolous with the sublime.

He hasn't got the New Yorker's speed of thought, of course, or his total affinity with the material in hand. None the less, *Pop Mechanics No 17* clatters across its 45 minutes like a Zorn composition in slo-mo, mixing in 60s free jazz, 70s progressive rock, a Beatles quote, some Company-styled bubble and squeak improvisation, a Headhunters percussion break, florid piano interludes and a reedy Vox Continental/Mystereos organ sound. There are even attempts at parodying some 50s rhythm and blues and some lounge-lizard cocktail jazz.

It doesn't work, though, because in the end Kuryokhin's attitude is that of a slumming intellectual, treating his chosen material with contempt rather than admiration. Viewed from that angle he'd be a lot better off if he

dropped the *dilettante* pose and went back to making some more of those quasi-jazz/classical solo-piano records that became his trademark during the mid-70s. At least that way he'd have the musos on his side.

TONY HERRINGTON

KEITH & JULIE TIPPETT COUPLE IN SPIRIT (Editions EG EGED 52)

Daybreak, Morning Psalm, Brinsford Spring Lullaby, Evening Psalm, Marching (We Shall Remember Those), The Choir And The Seven Impassioned, The Key At Dawn, Grey Mist With Yellow Waterfall Extra Vers Evening Targesse

Julie Tippett (recorder, zither, shaker, v), Keith Tippett (ky, bells, v).

THE TIPPETTS are at great pains to point out that they regard the pieces on this album as a single entity and that the whole thing was totally improvised "without any preconceived notation or architecture" – which begs the questions of whether they had a preconceived overall concept and whether the titles were thoughts imposed on the music after the event. Whichever, the tracks all hang together plausibly both in terms of mood and material. Although totally improvised these are not "live" performances in the sense of being recorded as they happened, as there is quite substantial use of overdubbing.

I've always enjoyed Keith's bands but usually find his work with Julie (and her own work, even as Jools Driscoll) severe and unaccommodating. *Couple In Spirit* was therefore a pleasant surprise. Though there are the odd passages that do nothing for me, these are far outweighed by music that is attractive and involving.

"Daybreak" opens with both Tippetts blowing across the necks of bottles before Julie's voice enters (wordless, as are all the vocals) to carry the melody over an increasingly dense background. "Morning Psalm" is busier still, Julie's voice tripped over the zither-like timbres of Keith's piano *ostinato*. On "Lullaby" she duets with herself in an otherwise unaccompanied song where the melodic shapes evoked for me the landscape of the Orkneys.

On "Marching" there is zither for real and two harpsichords on a rhythmic piece which sounds industrial after the pastoral atmosphere of most of side one. Again, the music is multi-layered and dense. "The Choir" contains some technically remarkable passages of rapid

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KEITH NICHOLS

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piano work, "The Key" is a continuous tumult of thunderous solo piano towards the end of which individual shapes emerge from the storm-clouds, while "Grey Mist" sounds like a gamelan on amphetamines.

BARRY WITHERDEN

ART FARMER BLAME IT ON MY YOUTH (Contemporary C-14042)

Recorded: New York, 4-5 February 1988
Blame It On My Youth, Fairytale Country, The Smile Of The Snake, Third Wave, Summer Serenade, Progress Report, I'll Be Around
 Art Farmer (tlh); Clifford Jordan (ss, ts), James Williams (p), Rufus Reid (b), Victor Lewis (d).

IT'S RECORDS like this that reinvest a listener's faith in jazz tradition. Musicians such as Farmer and Jordan, at this stage in their lives and careers, are doing nothing to forge new paths for the music. They're working entertainers, late in their own history. But to hear Art Farmer play "Blame It On My Youth" as he does here is to reaffirm most of the things that led us all to the music in the first place.

The flugelhorn is one of jazz's nuisance instruments - it's tough to play, which leads most brassmen into aiming for competence rather than excellence on the horn - and it can burnish ballads too comfortably, the way a soft-toned guitar can send a song to sleep. Farmer plays the tune muted, walks the melody out with the mildest of embellishments, and takes it at a pace just above dead slow. Reid and Lewis, masterfully, keep it flickering on the lowest of flames. Williams zeros in on the third strain of the AABA tune with a flawless understanding of Farmer's method, to create a sense of drama where you don't believe one can exist. Art strolls through it, but his dignity and bearing lend the finest lustre. You're holding your breath at the resolution, to the dying resonance of Reid's last note.

The whole record is much like that. Jordan has an admirable serpiece of his own in "I'll Be Around", while the rhythm section must be about the finest to hand in New York today. The way Lewis gently swings them all on "Fairytale" is marvellous, and Williams is peppery in his solos. Benny Carter's "Summer Serenade" is a minor classic. The simple elegance of the lead line provokes three impeccable solos, with Jordan finding a lyrical restraint I've never heard him deliver before.

A recent live review spoke of Art playing better than he ever has. On the evidence of this superb group record, I believe it.

RICHARD COOK

VAUGHAN HAWTHORNE THE PATH (Intouch Audio 2)

Recorded: London, 17/18 July 1988
The Path, Sisi Je, Autumn Leaves, Turnaround, Pies II, Klev
 Hawthorne (as, ss), Christian Jacob, Julian Joseph (p), Adam Salkeld (g), Bruno Destree (b), James Black, Mark Mondesir (d) (Collective personnel.)

IN THE first few months of 1981 the two big events for magazines like *Blues And Soul* and the dancers at the notorious Caister weekend were the release of MFSB's Dexter Wansel-produced *Mysteries Of The World* album and



Voices In The Rain by ex-Crusader Joe Sample. The unanimity of praise which greeted these pleasant but by any standards modest records was indicative of one of the more curious aspects of the late-70s/early-80s jazz/funk scene; namely the way in which both critics and fans alike accepted the depressing mediocrity of much of the music.

Hearing some of the ecstatic reactions to Vaughan Hawthorne's new album I get the same feeling about the New British Jazz scene of the late 80s, and, no doubt, early 90s.

For some reason Vaughan's career (if you can call two terms at Berklee and a week at Ronnie Scott's opening for Arturo Sandoval a career) hasn't taken off in the way that Jason Rebello's and Paul Reid's have. Maybe the world isn't ready for another intense young man with a saxophone and 80 years of tradition to support

Maybe pianos are the coming thing. Who knows? Certainly on the cover of *The Path* Vaughan strikes the requisite deadpan-serious pose and makes all the right noises about dedication and development. No problems there. It's what's going on inside the cover that concerns us, right? And for much of the time it's the music which fails to convince.

Whoever gets the job of documenting the resurgence of jazz in late-20th-century Britain will have to describe deep retrenchment and an unswerving adherence on the musicians' part to a point in the music's development just prior to its final fragmentation into freedom, fusion, frisson and facism. Although it flits in and out of the pattern more than most, *The Path* could be included as a representative example of this trend without too much creative accounting.

I like the tracks which stand out as exceptions to the rule best. Ornette Coleman's "Turnaround", for instance, is turned around into something from the swing-into-bop era complete with Charlie Christian phrases from guitarist Adam Salkeld. On "Autumn Leaves" Vaughan's solo captures something of the delicacy of Sonny Stitt, a soft, muffled sound as if the engineer had swathed the microphone in cotton wool. Even the distinctly Coltrane-inspired "Klev" comes out sounding more like a blurred recollection rather than a wholesale re-creation.

For the rest Vaughan falls into step with prevailing trends and the result, it has to be said, is depressingly mediocre.

TONY HERRINGTON

KEITH JARRETT
 DARK INTERVALS
 (ECM 1379 837 342-1 [LP]-2 [CD])
 Recorded: Tokyo, 11 April 1987
Opening, Hymn, American, Entrance, Parallels, For Dancer, Ritual Prayer, Revisiting
 Keith Jarrett (p)

WHEN THE sleeve tells you that "touch is only possible at the edge of spaces", and when the press release prepares you for "an extended aesthetic experience of great beauty", you can only brace yourself for the worst. Noting, with mounting apprehension, that the tracks have titles like "Hymn" and "Ritual Prayer", you gingerly lower stylus on to vinyl.

Actually it's all fairly painless stuff but you do start to wonder why each of these rather

inconsequential improvisations is greeted with such thunderous applause from the Tokyo audience. Apart from "Fire Dance", which does have plenty of attack and jerky vigour (all but neutralised by the over-resonant acoustic), and "Parallels", a technically impressive exercise in improvised fugue, everything here tends to blur into one seamless, unmemorable whole.

Jarrett seems so sure of his harmonic and structural vocabulary by now that it's hard to believe some of these pieces weren't pre-composed. This could be taken as a compliment, but I for one can't see the point of an improvised music that doesn't sound improvised. These consistently precious offerings sound like a formless variant of early-20th-century piano music (Honegger, maybe, or even Ravel on a bad day), only they haven't the wit to offer a parodic nod towards their sources.

The nearest thing we get here to free playing is a long section towards the end of "Opening", where Jarrett rumbles away at the bottom of the keyboard, worrying at the same pattern of notes for what seems like an eternity; but even here the final effect is of calculation. It's only a simulated loss of control, and soon afterwards, we're back to the prevailing idiom, which is a sort of mannered classicism. Perhaps this has something to do with Jarrett's recent (much acclaimed) recordings of Bach. If so, he still has a long way to go before he can work this influence into an improvised context.

JONATHAN COE

KIP HANRAHAN DAYS AND NIGHTS OF BLUE LUCK INVERTED

(Pangaea 461158-1)
Recorded: New York, May, September, October, 1985, March, May, August, September, October, December, 1986; January, March 1987
Love Is Like A Cigarette, A Polar Gaze, Luck Inverts Itself, Four Seasons; Gender, Marriage, American Clave, A Model Bronx Childhood, Ah Intruder! (Female), Lashon, Blue Request, My Life Outside Of Power, Road Song, The First And Last To Love Me (2 December), Unstoppable Days, Unstoppable Nights, Jerry Gonzalez (t, perc), Lew Soloff (ts), John Snubbsfield (ts), David Murray (ts), George Adams (as), Charles Neville (as), Rolando Nagelsson Bruclos (as), Mono Rivera (ts), Alfredo Trail (vn), Pablo Zugler (p), Peter Scherer (p, syn), Steve Swallow (p, b), Leo Nocentelli (g), Jack Bruce (b), Manfred Gonzalez (b), Fernando Saunders (b, v), Mahengoro Giovanni Hidalgo (perc), Milton Cardona (perc), Robbie Ameen (perc), Willie Green (perc), Ignacio

Berros (perc); Anton Fier (perc), Puntilla (perc), Carmen Lundy (v), Kip Hanrahan (perc, v, g, syn) (Collective personnel.)

NOW THAT Kip Hanrahan is officially a "creative anarchist", being the beneficiary of the full Pangaea marketing treatment, I guess his days of hip obscurity are numbered. Yet to many his name will be a new one.

Hailing from The Bronx and primarily a producer/percussionist, in 1980 Hanrahan founded the small, innovative American Clave label for which this album was originally recorded and from which most of the initial Pangaea releases are taken. For this record he assembled an impressive miscellany of associates: among others, musicians of the stature of David Murray, Lew Soloff, Steve Swallow,



salsa players Jerry Gonzalez and Puntilla and even Jack Bruce.

While diverse in approach, the spirit of *Days And Nights* . . . is largely formed by four elements — tenor saxophone, electric bass, vocals and most importantly percussion. With musicians listed collectively it's difficult to establish exactly who is performing on each track. Yet notable exceptions are David Murray's precise, exquisitely lyrical playing on Astor Piazzolla's chamber piece, "Ah Intruder!" (Female) and the instantly recognisable, warm, sonorous bass of Jack Bruce.

The vocals too, mostly, I assume down to Carmen Lundy, have a dark, confident, erotic soul — half-sung, half-spoken, never are they more intriguing than on "The First And Last . . ." a floating ballad interspersed by detached, recited lyrics, repeated again and

again.

Yet it's Hanrahan and his percussion ensemble that truly maintain the logic between tracks. It is they who set the ambience that shifts from slow blues to vibrant salsa to film scores to melancholy classicism.

In the liner notes Hanrahan declares that "this is a record that's here because there was (is?) a mood . . . that demanded to be heard". For some this mood will be too snapshot, too diffuse. The record's like one of those multi-view picture postcards: comprehensive, but you get no idea of what the place is really like.

Yet this album squeezed into my top 15 of last year precisely because of its dark passions and passing moods. With its "optional side endings" and enigmatic titles, I like its equivocations, its irreverence — it succeeds because it has rules all of its own.

PHILIP WATSON

PETER KING BROTHER BERNARD (Miles Music MM076)

Recorded: London, 20-30 April 1988
Overpass, Bad Beautyful, Dulse, Brother Bernard, Chantrel, Playing In The Yard
Peter King (as), John Herker (p), Dave Green (b), Tony Levin (d), Gus Guy Barker (t), Alan Skidmore (b), on final three tracks

BECAUSE THE first side is so impressive, one rather regrets that Skidmore and Barker come in on side two. "Brother Bernard" and "Chantrel" are pleasant tunes with tidy, accurate solos from everybody, and Sonny Rollins' "Playing In The Yard" is a knees-up, punctuated by Tony Levin's irritating bass-drum pedal. This is honourable bop, but the intense personality of the first side is eclipsed by the democracy.

King's prophet-without-honour image is becoming a little tiresome. Surely he doesn't *constantly* need old pals clucking over why he isn't recognised. The answer might be that, contrary to some assertions, King is less of a standard bearer than he seems. His manner is a very pure distillation of bebop. The saxophone lines often sound more like the young Lee Konitz than any of the more classic models. King's tone is singing and often exceptionally fine-spun, and coupled with his quicksilver delivery it means that the sense of tension endemic to gut-level bebop is absent. Instead, King accents his solos with infinite grace and subtlety. You never perceive frustration or

nerves in such refined playing.

He instils drama by a spare use of emphasis. "But Beautiful" is a ballad where King stretches the melody dangerously – this could easily have been a maudlin, mainstream idea of a slow tune – yet keeps it alive with his grace notes and clever phrase endings. Stevie Wonder's tune "Overjoyed" is not quite a bossa nova, and leads to an almost balletic series of choruses. The original "Dalin" is the setting for a more disjunctive, almost Rollins-like workout, which makes you wish King had pursued it further, instead they break for Hoeler's attractive solo.

Two sides like this would have produced an absolutely essential record. As it is, with the flesh choice of material and King in outstanding form, it's merely excellent.

RICHARD COOK

MAL WALDRON/JACKIE MCLEAN

LEFT ALONE '86
(Paddle Wheel K28P 6453)

Recorded: Tokyo, 1 September 1986

Left Alone, Gail Blue The Child, All Of Me, Cat Walk, Lover Man, Mister Palatine, Good Morning Heartache, All Alone

Mal Waldron (p), Jackie McLean (as), Herbie Lewis (b), Eddie Moore (d)

MAL WALDRON

FIRE WALTZ: ERIC DOLPHY AND BOOKER LITTLE REMEMBERED LIVE AT SWEET BASIL VOL. 2
(Paddle Wheel K28P 6476)

Recorded: New York, 3 & 4 October 1986

Fire Waltz, Number Eight

Mal Waldron (p), Richard Davis (b), Eddie Blackwell (d), Donald Harrison (as), Terence Blanchard (t)

MAL WALDRON TRIO

MAL, DANCE AND SOUL
(Tutu 888 002)

Recorded: Munich, 25 November 1987

Dancing On The Flames, A Box To The Classics, Little One, From A Little Astray, Soul Mate, Blood And Guts*

Mal Waldron (p), Ed Schuller (b), John Betsch (d), Jim Pepper (ts*)

IT'S TEMPTING to see the first two of these recordings, *Left Alone* and *Fire Waltz*, both as victims, though in different degrees, of the present – basically commendable – urge to compensate for decades of comparative neglect by treating jazz in a manner increasingly approximating that in which classical music is

treated. *Left Alone* has all the hallmarks of a hastily arranged and executed session: an over-reliance on standards, an unspectacular, not to say lukewarm rhythm section, and an overall air of lethargic familiarity. There are good moments, provided chiefly by Waldron's unfussy contributions – his familiar contrapuntal bounce leavened with funk, his intriguing fascination with repeated note patterns – but the album's appeal is limited by McLean's tone – mainly reedy with a breathy vibrato – which is not the most suitable for the material.

Fire Waltz is much more enjoyable. The front line of Harrison and Blanchard approach chest Dolphy and Little solos with an engaging mixture of reverence and spirit, and if the results inevitably lack the wonderful fiery eccentricity of the original Five Spot recordings – and at times both selections sound

the rhythm pairing of Schuller and Betsch are flawless in support, particularly the drummer, who has the trademark Blackwell side-drum punctuation down absolutely pat. Standouts are "Dancing On The Flames", which features Waldron skipping, as if firewalking, through a delightful solo full of sudden splashes of colour and growling low-register patterns; and the tender duo (with Jim Pepper) ballad "Soul Mates". For the rest, it's simply the pianist/composer at his considerable best – by turns lyrical and percussive, always imaginative.

CHRIS PARKER

JOHN CARTER FIELDS

(Gramavision 18-8809-1)

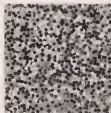
Recorded: New York, March 1988

Belief To Pay For, Beauty As At The Big House, Juke's Rave, Season, Fields, Children Of The Fields, On A Country Road

Carter (cl), Bobby Bradford (s), Theresa Jenson (v), v; Marty Ehrlich (bs, cl, f), Benny Powell (tr), Don Preston (syn, p), Fred Hopkins (b), Andrew Cyrille (d)

CARTER WAS BORN six months before Ornette Coleman and in the same town – Fort Worth. He has worked with Coleman's ideas in both small-group and orchestral settings, and he shared similar musical origins on the South-west blues circuit in the 50s. *Fields* is Carter's tribute to his childhood. It is a programmatic seven-part composition for improvisers, dealing with the rural Texan life that his parents and grandparents knew (even featuring an uncle's taped reminiscences as part of the background) and bringing together early black folk music, Texan blues and the kind of Mingus-like freebop that helped the Art Ensemble down the road.

It's a mixture that makes you wish there were more Carter around. The clarity of his view of what this session is expressing enables him to get the best from the improvisers' wider flights without becoming diverted from the country roads he set out to travel on. Some of the music is solemn and incantatory, featuring Theresa Jenson's undoubted and emphatic voice, moments that gather steam into intense collective improvisations in which an urban post-bop quality (stabbed piano comping, hustling hi-hat patterns and the restless bass of the great Fred Hopkins) still retains the flavour that Carter is after though Benny Powell's tough and raucous trombone.



slightly "prettified", as if the two ex-Messengers are playing classical music rather than improvising – they do amply demonstrate the earnest facility of Harrison and the flaring brilliance of Blanchard. The rhythm section, as on the original recordings, triumphantly vindicates the reputations of its individual constituents: Davis is his inimitably sinuous and melodic self, Waldron is unspectacular, but deliciously quirky – and it's obviously a treat to hear him playing a properly tuned piano, unlike the infamous original instrument – and Blackwell, though slightly more subdued these decades later, nevertheless contributes an intensely tuneful solo to "Number Eight".

Mal, *Dance And Soul* is my favourite of the three, by some distance. Waldron demonstrates total commitment to the material and

Snatches of hard-boppish melodic phrasing turn into wriggling bass-clarinet solos and Jenoure's violin blends a scything Ornette-like affection for broad melodic sweeps with the euphoric quality of a barn-dance fiddler. Carter's own clarinet playing is remarkable. The headlong "Juba's Run" finds it fragmented in phrasing but never amounting to a rubble of disconnected reflections. Carter's upper-register tune sounds like Coltrane's soprano and he almost entirely eschews the instrument's domesticated, cat-like languor.

Much of this session recalls the Art Ensemble in full cry, or a Billy Bang gag, but if anything the incomparable undercurrent of Cyrille's drums and Hopkins' bass gives it more momentum still. Even the notion of using Carter's uncle's voice in the relentless mid-tempo 4/4 title track (Hopkins' bass has that irresistible forward lean of Mingus) is not the precious device it might have been but an authentic part of the action. Carter even audaciously uses it in the finale, blowing a gurgly clarinet accompaniment to the chuckling voice of the old man, before the band

slides into a raucous blues. One of the year's most unexpected pleasures

JOHN FOREDEAM

MILT JACKSON

BEBOP

(East-West 790991-1)

Recorded: New York, 28 and 30 March 1988

An Private, Good Batt, Woody 'N' You, Non 'T The Time, Ornithology, Groover' High, Birks' Works, Salt Peanuts. Jon Faddis (tr), J.J. Johnson (tb), Jimmy Heath (ts), Cedar Walton (ph), Jackson (vib), John Clayton (b), Mickey Roker (d).

IN JAZZ, as in most cultural activities, practitioners develop a personal style in their 20s or (in a few cases) their 30s, and spend the rest of their careers essentially embroidering it. It takes a Wittgenstein or a Picasso or a Miles Davis to have the genius to go on developing in new directions – and even then we're not sure if they aren't really just playing the same solo. So . . . part of what's involved in "bebop as museum-art" (of which this LP is a self-conscious example) is simply older players continuing to play the music of their youth.

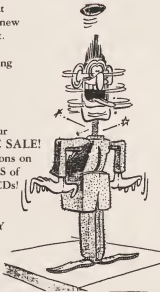
A more dubious aspect is younger players simply imitating that music. But when the result is as enjoyable as this LP, do we need to worry about the ideological skirmishing in the background? Lou Levy says that bebop is "the equivalent in jazz of what Bach was in classical music". Derek Bailey replies that jazz is displaying an "obsession with its antecedents". I'm just glad Milt Jackson and Jimmy Heath are still around and playing as well as they do here.

Nesuhi Ereğün (ex-Atlantic records) planned an "authentic bebop date" for his return to jazz with his new East-West label. Pity he had to be content with young Jon Faddis though. Humphrey Lyttelton once said of a track featuring the two trumpeters, "You can tell which is Jon Faddis and which is Dizzy Gillespie because it's Jon Faddis who sounds more like Dizzy Gillespie." Jimmy Heath, fortunately, is playing himself, and how beautifully his authoritative tenor lines reflect the changes. Classy arrangements, superb digital recording and welcome back Nesuhi.

ANDY HAMILTON

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ARTS COUNCIL

FAST LICKS

CARLA BLEY/SYDNEY SWALLOW: DUETS (Watt 20). People have been getting a bit snuffy about Carla Bley recently, suggesting that her music is starting to sound a little too soft-centered and tuneful for its own good. But if there's nothing particularly electrifying about this new release, at least it reminds us (most of these pieces having been recorded before) of how hard-edged, articulate and ironic she can be. It's also a pleasure to hear her playing the piano on record at last: chord voicings are rich and unexpected, and the solos are models of spontaneous coherence. Swallow continues to treat the bass guitar as a fully-fledged melodic instrument (notably on the sublime "Urviðlingssang") and the session finishes with a rousing version of his "Ladies In Mercedes". Clever music and by no means lacking in feeling.

JONATHAN COE

PHINEAS NEWBORN: BACK HOME (Contemporary C-7648). In the late 50s Newborn was hailed as the new Oscar Peterson, his virtuosity and frequent glibness warranting the accolade. A nervous breakdown in the 60s seemed to result in a changed, more affecting style (shades of Mal Waldron's history). This 1976 recording, I think issued here for the first time by Contemporary, is one result – and a rather bizarre and poignant one too. The minor mode predominates, the playing has lost its earlier brilliance – it's now very behind the beat and the dazzling setpiece runs sound almost apologetic. The rhythm pairing of Ray Brown and Elvin Jones are surprisingly subservient and Phineas often sounds as if he ought to be playing without them. All this fits the storyline described above, and it adds up to a strangely compelling offering, with beautiful versions of "Love For Sale", "Ill Wind" and Newborn's own sad ballad "Pamela". Anyone know where he is now?

ANDY HAMILTON

TEDDY CHARLES: THE TEDDY CHARLES TENET (Atlantic 90983-1). A valuable and hip reissue. Charles has long since disappeared from sight, but he was one of the most adventurous leaders of the 50s; for this date, he commissioned scores from Mal Waldron, Gil Evans (a shimmering treatment of "You Go To

My Head") and George Russell (the labyrinthine "Lydian M-1", which is as great as anything on *Jazz Workshop*). The Tenet includes Art Farmer, Gigi Gryce, J.R. Monterose and Jimmy Raney, but Charles himself is as outstanding as any of them, his vibes solos full of lucid, original lines. His own tune "The Emperor" is as grand and exotic as its title, while Jimmy Guiffre's "The Quiet Time" and the leader's chart for "Nature Boy" are far-free mood pieces, wonderfully sustained. There are no dull moments in this very fine set.

RICHARD COOK

DAGMAR KRAUSE: TANK BATTLES – THE SONGS OF HANNS EISLER (Amittes AN 8739). Or Sing Me A Little Worker Struggle Song (c. Max Goldt, Foyer Des Arts) Part 1929. For all the combined rigour and vigour of Eisler's



musical engagement with the German/International Left's battles for a united voice, his songs do not readily slip through time and immediately slot into our lives. No matter how much many of us wish otherwise, they cannot travel without a mule's burden of footnotes clarifying their period importance. Properly documented, they are, of course, of immense historical interest. For all Krause's good work *Tank Battles* restricts its use value by not including sufficient explanatory notes of the songs' origins or of Eisler's lesser-known collaborators, like the poignant satirist Kurt Tucholsky. Alone, the composer's terse scores allow for little contemporary meddling or ornamentation, the consequence being that almost every Eisler song album, whether recorded in London or East Berlin, in German or English, 1929 or 1989, sounds a similar shrill

note of defiance. Though a valuable introduction for English-speaking audiences, the impact of Krause's selection is ultimately diminished by the absence of Brecht/Eisler's two most immediately stirring march numbers "Soldatensiedel" and "Worker's Unity Front Song". Altogether now, sing me

HIBA KOPPE

VARIOUS ARTISTS: DANCE BANDS UK (BBC REB 681). It looks like nothing special, but this is a brilliantly chosen compilation. Sixteen British dance bands from the 20s and 30s are represented and Robert Parker has picked the most jazz-oriented titles he could find for each of them. That might not amount to much with, say, Bertin's Tower Blackpool Dance Band. But there's the tremendous "Leven Thirty Saturday Night" by the Arcadians Dance Orchestra; Ray Noble's "You Ought To See Sally On Sunday", with Max Goldberg and Freddy Gardner in elegant form; Lew Stone's swoon from the Casa Loma Orchestra, "Blue Jazz"; the Savoy Havana Band's unexpectedly tough "Masculine Women And Feminine Men"; and Fred Elizalde's "Singapore Sorrows" (though it's a pity they couldn't have included its session-mate, "Nobody's Sweetheart", probably the best jazz record made in Britain in the 20s). Hear this LP if you want to know how jazz crept through to the people in pre-war Britain.

RICHARD COOK

STAN HASSELGÄRD: YOUNG CLARINET 1940-48 (Dragon DRLP 163). This record is either for those very, very interested in Stan Hasselgård, or those curious about the state of jazz in war-time Sweden. The music is amiable, touching and thoroughly respectable, devoted – with the exception of two tracks – to Hasselgård's work with a variety of Stockholm outfits prior to his departure for America. All the musicians, Hasselgård included, base their work fairly and squarely on the Goodman small groups. As imitations of Goodman, Hampton, Wilson etc., the results are very competent, and of course it is interesting to hear the apprenticeship of the man who came closer than anyone else to playing bop on the clarinet, but it's a long way from his work of a few years later. A couple of tracks sound as if somebody was using a sewing machine close to the mike while they were being recorded.

MARTIN GAYFORD

WOKE UP
THIS MORNING

Recent Blues by Mike Atberton

IN FACT, neither of the first two artists under consideration this month did wake up this morning. Trendsetting Texas guitarist Aaron "T-Bone" Walker and Tennessee blues shouter Big Maybelle both died in the 70s; both are commemorated by the release of double albums on Charly Records.

T-Bone plugged his guitar into an amplifier some time in the early 40s and, by so doing, became the inspiration of a whole generation of blues players and earned the epithet of "Father of modern blues". His glory days, when he rode high on the success of songs like "Stormy Monday Blues", were in the late 40s and early 50s; this album, *The Bluesway Sessions* (Charly CDX 31) was cut in '67 and '68, finding him way past his commercial peak and a little way beyond his artistic one.

Teamed with a big ten-piece band which includes pianist Lloyd Glenn and altoist Preston Love, Bone shows that he could still pull the stops out even at 57 years of age: tunes like "Going To Funky Town", unexpectedly a slow instrumental, are vehicles for his quintessential Texas guitar style — crisp, sharp and adorned by his trademark kickback which many, including Chuck Berry, would emulate. Those familiar with "Stormy Monday", a version of which is included here, will know of Walker's skill as a lyricist, a skill which hadn't deserted him at these sessions. His "Party Girl" has "Bags under your eyes big as a barnyard door", and he accuses his "Long Skirt Baby" of wearing fashions "Going back to horse and buggy days".

So, there is much to admire and enjoy in the album's 19 tracks. Unfortunately, there is also a clutch of forgettable hitch-it-to-the-funky-boogaloo offerings such as "Flower Blues" on which Walker displays

an avid desire to finish the session as soon as possible and make it to the next whisky bar. His great recordings for Capitol and Black And White are available on previous Charly LPs, and should be checked out before this one.

For T-Bone, it was booze; for Big Maybelle Smith, it was drugs. A mountain of a woman who tipped, or perhaps broke, the scales at some 30 stone, her beatific smile hid a desperate dependence on heroin which lasted all her adult life. She made big money for a black singer in the 1950s and spent most of it on heroin, amazingly surviving to the age of 52 when her ravaged life ended. Her last words were "Thank God".



From somewhere in that immense frame welled a resonant, shuddering rasp of a voice which could strip paint off a wall or stop the traffic on the M25. It's a voice whose phrasing is oddly reminiscent of a female Howlin' Wolf, and like the Wolf's it can surprise and delight, suddenly subsiding from frontal assault to touching tenderness.

From 1952 to 1956 Maybelle worked for Okeh Records, where she cut most of her best material. Twenty-two tracks from this period, including three never before released, are on Charly's handsomely-packaged double LP *The Okeh Sessions* (Charly CDX 27). Many of the selections, such as her big hit "Gabbins Blues", are taken at an appropriately

elephantine lumbering tempo laid down by brassy, horny New York session men. Strong lyrics, their humour enhanced by Maybelle's arms-akimbo delivery, abound on numbers like "Stay Away From My Sam" and "I'm Getting Along Alright", a soul hit for The Raelettes a dozen years later.

There's a sprinkling of slow blues, ranging from formidably forceful as on "Maybelle's Blues", which surprisingly has Brownie McGhee on guitar, to the husky tenderness of "You'll Never Know", with Sam The Man Taylor in subdued mood on tenor. The lady has a couple of stabs at rock'n'roll, too: "Country Man" is an invigorating barnstormer which somehow escaped release at the time, while "Whole Lotta Shakin'" should have done — it's the only thing on the LP which even comes close to being a dud, thanks to a concrete-booted rhythm section which even master guitarist Mickey Baker can't rescue. But as a memorial to one of life's losers who made so many winning records, this collection would be very hard to beat and is highly recommended.

Which leaves us with the most astoundingly cross-cultural blues LP of the year. Entitled *Snake In My Bedroom* (Red Lightnin' RL 0073), it's a collaboration between Chicago stalwarts Sunnyland Slim, Bob Stroger and S.P. Leary and a Norwegian blues band, Chicago Blues Meeting. They tackle an intelligent mix of material, ranging from a little-known Junior Wells number, via Otis Rush and Leroy Foster, to some group compositions. And they tackle it with flair and aplomb. The sound is Chicago all the way and frighteningly authentic. I never thought I'd be writing about Sven Zettenberg's wailing harp with its echoes of Junior Wells and Carey Bell, or praising Knut Reiersrud's searing West Side guitar runs, but that's the case here. Give a listen to cuts like "Bout The Break Of Day" and discover Red Lightnin's best straight blues release in years.



34/35



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46/47



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57



58/59

- 1 STEVE LACY, Eric Dolphy, John Stevens
- 12 AFRO JAZZ, Laurie Anderson, Cecil Taylor
- 14 MIKE WESTBROOK, John Surman, Annie Whitehead
- 15 PAT METHENY, George Benson, Derek Bailey
- 17 RAY CHARLES, John Gilmore, Herbie Nichols
- 18 SONNY ROLLINS, Bobby McFerrin, Tommy Chase
- 19 ORNETTE COLEMAN, Urban Sax, Slim Gaillard
- 20 ART BLAKEY, Hank Mobley, Ganelin Trio
- 21 CHET BAKER, Michael Nyman, Latin Jazz
- 22 JOHN COLTRANE, Nathan Davis, James Ulmer
- 23 LOOSE TUBES, Bill Laswell, Anita O'Day
- 24 BETTY CARTER, John Abercrombie, Sidney Bechet
- 25 COURTNEY PINE, Paul Motian, George Coleman
- 30 CHICO FREEMAN, Alex Schlippenbach, The Fall
- 31 HERBIE HANCOCK, John Zorn, Toru Takemitsu
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- 52 SONNY ROLLINS, Ed Blackwell, Ornette Coleman
- 53 JOHN SCOFIELD, John McLaughlin, Johnny Hodges
- 54 JASON REBELLO, Jimmy Rowles, Adelaide Hall
- 55 DAVID SANBORN, John Lewis, Booker Little
- 56 COMPOSERS ISSUE, Carla Bley, Mike Gibbs
- 57 BIRD, Billy Bang, Red Rodney
- 58/59 ALBERT AYLER, Shannon Jackson, Manfred Eicher
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ASK A POLICEMAN

A PROBLEM that crops up out here is that the magazine covers get disapproved of by the religious police at the Post Office and then get chucked in the bin. I kid you not! I can't think that *Wire*, with its resolutely non-sexist, non-alcoholist covers should be guilty of anti-Islamic crimes like this, but maybe. Could you send me a replacement in a plain brown envelope, please?

IAN POPEL, Dhahran, KSA

WHAT DOES A DJIIRIDOO, ANYWAY?

THANK YOU for the review of Craig Harris's album *Blackout In The Square Root Of Soul* (*Wire* 57). In your review, you state that Craig Harris plays djiridoo on "Generations". This is misinformation. The djiridoo is played on the last track on side one, which is entitled "Free I".

As for the "knockabout trombone solo" on "Blues Dues", the basis of the improvisation is a 12-bar and an 11-bar blues form. The difference between this form and your beloved "You Are My Sunshine" is as clear as black and white. Word!

Keep listening and enjoy the music.

MARTIN URBACH, Riverdale NYC

GETTING IT TAPED

I FIND Mike Zwerni's comments (*Wire* 58/59) incomplete, saying nothing about how it feels to have your own album taped instead of purchased.

There is more than one way to misread reality. "Most of what we copy today, we erase next week" is perhaps understandable as the wishful thinking of a musician. A musician with specific reasons to copy specific albums or specific tracks.

My last flatmate had a massive collection of

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*

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cassettes, all with handwritten title cards, but no discernible stock of pre-recorded cassettes or albums. Except for the ones he borrowed from the free public library.

As for Zwerni, was it less OK to tape his Kurt Weill album when it was rare and I had to borrow it (with a view to interviewing Zwerni) back in 1983? Or is it better to tape it now that it's available again? After all, somebody might buy his next one.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY, London N7

I AGREE with Mike Zwerni (*Wire* 58/59) that home-taping helps to spread music. In fact, it can even save music. As a music journalist myself, I've often had to home-tape borrowed copies of hard-to-get or deleted LPs prior to interviewing the musicians concerned: without that recourse to home-taping I know my articles would be less informed, less informative and possibly non-existent.

Major labels in particular appear to treat jazz and experimental music with scant respect. When they release such LPs at all, it's almost always in small numbers and then they delete them again in a couple of months. Most of the musicians I've interviewed are far more concerned and angry about this practice than they are about home-taping.

Unless record companies can guarantee to

keep their releases in catalogue (as ECM and Black Saint/Soul Note now do), I suggest they shut up about home-taping. It is their own money-blindness and obsession with commercial pap which are the real music-killers.

JOHN DENNE, London N10

DOLLAR'S AND SENSE

I HAVE just read Tony Herrington's review of Abdullah Ibrahim's African recordings (*Wire* 58/59). Mr H takes half of his review telling us that everybody else who reviews or likes Ibrahim is just a sycophantic fellow traveller and that he, Mr H, is the only one who knows where it's at! (*Did he say that? - Ed*)

I do not object to reviewers writing that they don't like a record; that is their opinion, and if fairly stated is justified. However, to imply that everyone from Duke Ellington (who was an admirer of Ibrahim's playing and encouraged him immensely) down to me, is either suffering from cloth ears or pseudo-political brainwashing is over the top, even for Mr H.

In the last sentence of his review he also advised Ibrahim how to improve his playing. Ibrahim plays how he wants to play and not how I or Mr H would like him to play. That is the prerogative of any musician. I would suggest to readers of *Wire* that to read a more moderate and balanced view of Ibrahim's work they read Ian Carr's piece on Ibrahim in *Jazz: The Essential Companion*, where Mr Carr does mention the words Mr H complains of, although he does mention "a tremendous harmonic, melodic and emotional resonance".

Having re-read some of Mr H's previous reviews, I wonder if he actually enjoys music at all.

KEITH RAISON, Ickenham

Like every good critic, Tony Herrington speaks his mind - Ed.

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